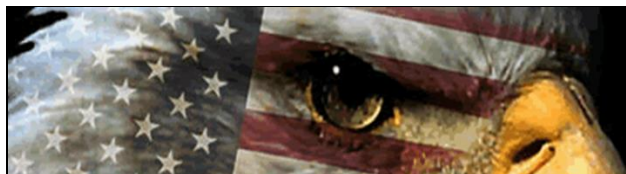



<div>  <div> Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS TUESDAY — 16 AUG 2022 </div>  </div>			
	International	National	Regional and Local
Events, Opportunities Go to articles	08/16 Day 174 of the Russia invasion 08/16 Ukraine war cleanup raves 08/16 Putin blasts US 'hegemony' 08/16 Ukraine determined to win back south 08/16 UK: Russia's Black Sea Fleet struggling 08/16 Russia withdrawal brings more shelling 08/16 Russia: no need to use nukes in Ukraine 08/16 Explosions hit Russia ammo depot Crimea 08/16 China rations electricity to factories 08/16 China military ship docks in Sri Lanka 08/16 Forgotten virus: Zika children, families 08/16 Iran 'written response' nuclear deal talks 08/16 China: more military drills around Taiwan 08/16 Russia mercenaries seek gold central Africa 08/15 Ukraine's factories moving west 08/15 Shelling hits nuclear plant's fire station 08/15 Inside Russia's brutal Ukraine detentions 08/15 Ukraine chips away at Russia-held region 08/15 Ukraine: strike hits Russia mercenary base 08/15 Ukraine recruits intense UK military training 08/15 Occupation administration Kherson region 08/15 Britain monkeypox outbreak 'signs slowing' 08/15 Russia offers to sell weapons to world 08/15 Kenya presidential election winner; dispute	08/16 Steep water cuts coming for Southwest 08/16 US approves 94% tech exports to China 08/16 Struggle: convince allies, Ukraine on Russia 08/15 CDC updates monkeypox guidance 08/15 Child in Florida tests positive monkeypox 08/15 DOJ objects to public release of affidavit 08/15 Border apprehensions fiscal year record 08/15 Falling oil prices defy predictions: next? 08/15 California mental health workers on strike 08/15 Rising airfares, flight cancellations looming 08/15 Calif. 'Big One' something other than quake 08/15 Recall: Home Run Inn frozen pizza 08/15 Recalls: Capri Sun, King's Hawaiian, swings	08/15 WA teachers test free science curriculum 08/15 AMR pays \$1.4M in fines: ambulances late 08/15 Apple crop forecast: smaller this year 08/15 Wildfires threaten nearby Leavenworth
Cyber, Tech Awareness Go to articles	08/16 Hackers attack UK water supplier 08/16 Microsoft disrupts Russia cyberespionage 08/15 Russian hackers continue to target Ukraine 08/15 Spyware scandals ripping thru Europe	08/15 Credential theft still top attack method 08/15 Cybersecurity never been more unstable 08/15 Callback phishing attacks massive growth 08/15 Phishing scam targets healthcare providers	
Terrorism, Extremism Go to articles	08/16 Arrests: 3 Israelis in ISIS attack plot 08/16 Taliban plagued by internal factions 08/16 Al Qaeda, Islamic State rise in Africa 08/16 GSIM claims killing Wagner mercenaries 08/16 Terror magazines exploit sarcastic humor 08/15 France quits Mali: 9yrs, \$billions, lives lost	08/15 Border: 10 more terror suspects nabbed 08/15 Drones attack US-led coalition Syria base 08/15 US: no release \$3.5B Afghan frozen funds 08/15 Relatives drone-strike victims still stranded 08/15 US signals greater involvement in Somalia?	
Suspicious, Unusual Go to articles	08/16 German industry at risk as Rhine falls	08/15 More dangerous heat waves across the US	08/15 Heat waves to intensify in areas of WA
Crime, Criminals Go to articles	08/15 Julian Assange lawyers sue CIA for spying 08/15 Ecuador city dramatic rise gang bombings	08/16 Struggle to prosecute pandemic fraud 08/16 FBI: 84 child sex trafficking victims rescued 08/15 Muslim killings in Albuquerque 08/15 Ex-cops reject Floyd killing plea deal 08/15 Rushdie suspect days before the attack 08/15 Man jailed for loud noise panic at airport	08/15 Seattle police: Kia thefts spiking 08/15 Bellevue organized retail theft ring 08/15 Gig Harbor police chief crime report 08/15 Seattle mayor decries weekend shootings 08/15 Port Orchard man sentenced for Capitol riot

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Events, Opportunities

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 China: more military drills around Taiwan
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/taiwan-china-beijing-nancy-pelosi-tsai-ing-wen-a3f7121cdb6aae8efeb37699aa34c5ea
GIST	TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — China announced more military drills around Taiwan as the self-governing island's president met with members of a new U.S. congressional delegation on Monday, threatening to

renew tensions between Beijing and Washington after a similar recent visit by U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi [angered China](#).

Pelosi was the highest-level member of the U.S. government to visit Taiwan in 25 years, and her trip prompted nearly two weeks of [threatening military exercises by China](#), which claims the island as its own. In those drills, Beijing fired missiles over the island and into the Taiwan Strait and [sent warplanes and navy ships](#) across the waterway's midline, which has long been a buffer between the sides that split amid civil war in 1949.

China accuses the U.S. of encouraging the island's independence through the sale of weapons and engagement between U.S. politicians and the island's government. Washington says it does not support independence, has no formal diplomatic ties with the island and maintains that the two sides should settle their dispute peacefully — but it is legally bound to ensure the island can defend itself against any attack.

American and Taiwanese officials have accused China of using Pelosi's visit as a pretext for intimidating moves, and a senior U.S. official said recently that Washington would continue to deepen its ties with Taiwan in the coming days and weeks.

The latest trip began Sunday with little notice ahead of time — and drew more ire from China. The delegation was due to leave late Monday.

“China will take resolute and strong measures to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity,” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said at a daily briefing Monday, after Beijing announced new drills in the seas and skies surrounding Taiwan. “A handful of U.S. politicians, in collusion with the separatist forces of Taiwan independence, are trying to challenge the one-China principle, which is out of their depth and doomed to failure.”

The new exercises were intended to be “resolute response and solemn deterrent against collusion and provocation between the U.S. and Taiwan,” the Defense Ministry said earlier.

It was not clear if the new drills had already started since the ministry gave no details about where and when they would be conducted, in contrast to previous rounds.

The U.S. lawmakers, led by Democratic Sen. Ed Markey of Massachusetts, met with President Tsai Ing-wen, Foreign Minister Joseph Wu and legislators, according to the American Institute in Taiwan, Washington's de facto embassy on the island.

At their meeting, Tsai said her administration was working with allies to ensure stability in the Taiwan Strait and maintain the status quo — a reference to the island's self-governance, separate from Beijing.

“Russia's invasion of Ukraine earlier this year has shown the threat that authoritarian nations pose to the global order,” Tsai said.

Markey responded by saying Washington and Taipei had a “moral obligation to do everything we can to prevent an unnecessary conflict and Taiwan has demonstrated incredible restraint and discretion during challenging times.”

The senator also highlighted legislation intended to boost political and economic ties with Taiwan, especially in the critical semiconductor industry. Taiwan is a crucial provider of computer chips for the global economy, including China's high-tech sectors, and beyond the geopolitical risks of rising tensions in the region, an extended crisis in the Taiwan Strait could have major implications for international supply chains at a time when the world is already facing disruptions and uncertainty.

Markey is one of the few members of Congress still serving who voted for the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act that ensured continued relations with the island following the switch of U.S. diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing. The other members of the delegation are Republican Rep. Aumua Amata Coleman

Radewagen, a delegate from American Samoa, and Democrats John Garamendi and Alan Lowenthal from California and Don Beyer from Virginia.

In a statement from his Senate office, Markey cited the 1979 law in saying the U.S. must maintain its commitment to “help Taiwan withstand cross-Straits coercion” and avoid conflict.

China says it wants to use peaceful means to bring Taiwan under its control, but its recent saber rattling has emphasized its threat to take the island by military force. The earlier drills appeared to be a rehearsal of a blockade or attack on Taiwan that would force the cancellation of commercial flights and disrupt shipping to Taiwan’s main ports as well as cargo passing through the Taiwan Strait, one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes.

The exercises prompted Taiwan to put its military on alert, but were met largely with defiance or apathy among the public used to living in China’s shadow.

The American “visit at this time is of great significance, because the Chinese military exercise is (intended) to deter U.S. congressmen from visiting Taiwan,” Lo Chih-cheng, the chair of the Taiwan legislature’s Foreign and National Defense Committee, said after meeting with the U.S. lawmakers.

“Their visit this time proves that China cannot stop politicians from any country to visit Taiwan, and it also conveys an important message that the American people stand with the Taiwanese people,” Lo said.

A senior White House official on Asia policy said last week that China had used Pelosi’s visit as an excuse to launch an intensified pressure campaign against Taiwan.

“China has overreacted, and its actions continue to be provocative, destabilizing, and unprecedented,” Kurt Campbell, a deputy assistant to U.S. President Joe Biden, said on a call with reporters on Friday.

Campbell said the U.S. would send warships and planes through the Taiwan Strait in the next few weeks and is developing a roadmap for trade talks with Taiwan that he said the U.S. intends to announce in the coming days.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Putin blasts US ‘hegemony’
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/hub/world-news?utm_source=apnewsnav&utm_medium=navigation
GIST	<p>MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin accused the United States of trying to encourage extended hostilities in Ukraine as part of what he described Tuesday as Washington’s alleged efforts to maintain its global hegemony.</p> <p>Addressing a security conference attended by military officials from Africa, Asia and Latin America, Putin reaffirmed his long-held claim that he sent troops into Ukraine in response to Washington turning the country into an “anti-Russia” bulwark.</p> <p>“They need conflicts to retain their hegemony,” Putin charged. “That’s why they have turned the Ukrainian people into cannon fodder. The situation in Ukraine shows that the United States is trying to drag the conflict out, and it acts in exactly the same way trying to fuel conflicts in Asia, Africa and Latin America.”</p> <p>The speech represented the latest attempt by the Russian leader to rally support amid bruising Western sanctions that targeted the Russian economy and finance along with its government structures, top officials and businesses for Moscow’s action in Ukraine.</p> <p>Putin also drew parallels between the U.S. backing Ukraine and a recent visit to Taiwan by U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, charging that both were part of an alleged American attempt to foment global instability.</p>

“The American adventure in Taiwan wasn’t just a trip by an irresponsible politician. It was part of a deliberate and conscious U.S. strategy intended to destabilize the situation and create chaos in the region and the entire world, a blatant demonstration of disrespect for another country’ sovereignty and its own international obligations,” Putin said.

The Russian leader claimed that “Western globalist elites” were trying “to shift the blame for their own failures to Russia and [China](#),” adding that “no matter how hard the beneficiaries of the current globalist model try to cling to it, it’s doomed.”

“The era of the unipolar world order is nearing its end,” he added.

Speaking at the same conference, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu charged that along with supplies of weapons to Ukraine, Western allies also have provided detailed intelligence information and deployed instructors to help the Ukrainian military operate the weapons systems.

“Western intelligence agencies not only have provided target coordinates for launching strikes, but Western specialists also have overseen the input of those data into weapons systems,” Shoigu said.

He dismissed allegations that Russia could potentially use nuclear or chemical weapons in the conflict as an “absolute lie.”

“From the military viewpoint, there is no need for [using nuclear weapons](#) in Ukraine to achieve the stated goals,” Shoigu said. “The main mission of the Russian nuclear forces is providing a deterrent against a nuclear attack.”

Shoigu added that the claims of a possible chemical attack by Russia were equally “absurd,” saying that Moscow fully liquidated its chemical weapons stockpiles in compliance with an international treaty banning chemical weapons.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Russia mercenaries seek gold central Africa
SOURCE	https://www.news24.com/fin24/economy/russian-mercenaries-seek-gold-sow-chaos-in-central-africa-20220816
GIST	<p>The Central African Republic is defending the use of Russian assistance to take back territory the government says rebels have illegally occupied, despite widespread claims of indiscriminate killings of civilians and looting of mining sites.</p> <p>Albert Yaloke Mokpeme, spokesman for the CAR presidency, denied in a written response to questions from Bloomberg that fighters from the Wagner Group, which the US says is linked to the Kremlin, operate in the country. He disputed claims made to Bloomberg by artisanal miners, rebels and humanitarians, and allegations in United Nations reports that mercenaries alongside the national army have killed scores of people, looted communities and displaced thousands as they increase their control of gold-mining areas in the war-torn country.</p> <p>Instead, he said CAR forces have been assisted in fighting the rebels by unarmed Russian military trainers who arrived in 2018 under a deal struck with President Vladimir Putin’s government.</p> <p>“Central African armed forces, helped by Russian and Rwandan allies, have succeeded in pushing the rebels back and taking back a significant part of the national territory and illegally occupied mining sites,” Mokpeme said, also referring to Rwandan soldiers who are assisting the CAR army. “We have the legitimacy to defend our country when it is attacked.”</p>

But UN officials, humanitarians and civilians say that Wagner has focused on mining sites since it arrived in the CAR four years ago. The mercenaries have been essential to keeping President Faustin-Archange Touadera in power, according to analysts.

Blinken's warning in SA

Last October, the UN working group on mercenaries [urged](#) the CAR government to “end all relationships with private military and security personnel, particularly the Wagner Group,” which it alleged was “committing systemic and grave human rights and international humanitarian law violations” including summary executions, torture, rape and arbitrary detention.

The “Kremlin-backed” Wagner “exploits instability to pillage resources and commit abuses with impunity, as we’ve seen in Mali and the Central African Republic,” US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said [in a speech](#) in South Africa during a trip to three African countries last week.

The Kremlin denies any connection to Wagner, but the US State Department [said in May](#) that it acts as a proxy for the Russian government, helping to “spread a trail of lies and human rights abuses.” Wagner and other actors exploit “turbulent situations through disinformation to sway public support for the Russian government to expand its influence,” it said.

Facing western isolation since its invasion of Ukraine, Russia has sought to deepen its ties with African countries -- last month, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov toured the continent, including a stop at the African Union headquarters in Ethiopia.

Unstable regimes in Africa have sought assistance from Wagner to prop up their governments, including in Libya, Mali and Sudan, [according to the US](#).

'Killed randomly'

The US says Wagner is controlled by Yevgeny Prigozhin, a restaurateur and tycoon who has been dubbed Putin’s “chef.” He denies any links to the group and a spokesperson for his catering company, Concord Group, didn’t respond to questions seeking comment about recent attacks, whether it operates in the CAR or the nature of its activities.

In June, a top European Union court [rejected](#) Prigozhin’s bid to overturn [EU sanctions](#) imposed in October 2020 over Wagner’s deployment to Libya. He said in his application to the court that he had “no knowledge of an entity known as Wagner Group” or “links with any such entity,” [according to the judgment](#). Last December, the EU sanctioned Wagner itself for allegedly deploying mercenaries to conflict zones to fuel violence and loot natural resources in violation of international law.

Mokpeme denied the use of Russian mercenaries in military operations in the country. But half a dozen UN officials, diplomats and humanitarians interviewed by Bloomberg tell a different story: one where national troops alongside Russian fighters have indiscriminately killed small-scale miners and taken over mines.

Alnazir Mohamed said he was digging for gold when an attack helicopter swooped to the ground flanked by tanks. Soldiers who appeared to be foreign streamed into the mining site and opened fire. Mohamed fled across the border into Sudan. But dozens of miners died that day in March in eastern CAR, according to Mohamed and six other people who said they were eyewitnesses. They also reported seeing Russian-speaking soldiers.

“They killed randomly and looted, taking everything including property, money and gold,” Mohamed, 30, said in an interview last month in Nyala, Sudan.

The mercenaries, working with the domestic army, killed at least 100 artisanal miners between March and June, according to a tally kept by local rebel leaders. Attacks in the area continued until at least June, according to several people who said they witnessed the incidents.

“Their forces scout gold-mining areas using drones,” said Enrica Picco, a senior analyst with the International Crisis Group who was previously a member of the UN panel of experts on the CAR and has been doing field research since Russian fighters arrived in the country. “Then they use helicopters to deploy soldiers who indiscriminately kill miners and rebels in control of the site, loot property and steal gold.”

'We lost everything'

The mercenaries are not alone in allegedly attacking civilians. The UN Human Rights Office last month published two reports detailing events that could constitute crimes against humanity, alleging both pro- and anti-government militias committed sexual violence and attacks on unarmed civilians.

The CAR has been engulfed in unrest for more than two decades. Mokpeme didn't respond to a question about how CAR, one of the world's poorest countries, is paying Wagner. But diplomats, UN officials and analysts allege that the company has been granted mining concessions as compensation.

The government “is allowing Wagner seemingly unconditional access to control and pillage the country's rich resources while supporting violence, including kidnapping, rape, torture, and mass killing,” said Nathalia Dukhan, a senior investigator at The Sentry, an organization that seeks to disable networks that benefit from violent conflict and has documented alleged incidents involving Wagner.

The country's diamond, gold and uranium reserves have long fueled illegal smuggling and attracted miners from across the region.

Mohamed Zakaria, a 35-year-old miner from Sudan, said many Sudanese nationals traveled to the CAR to find work after coming under pressure from militias there.

“As we heard that the Central African Republic is a gold-rich country, we traveled there and began working with good conditions and production,” Zakaria said. “But we later came under attack from Russian fighters and we lost everything.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Steep water cuts coming for Southwest
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/16/us/colorado-river-water-cuts-lake-mead-negotiations-climate/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)An extraordinary drought in the West is drying up the Colorado River and draining the nation's largest reservoirs -- Lake Mead and Lake Powell. And amid the overuse of the river and the aridification of the region, the federal government is preparing to make mandatory water cuts and asking states to devise a plan to save the river basin.</p> <p>Two major announcements could come Tuesday. The first is a forecast from the US Bureau of Reclamation that could trigger the first-ever Tier 2 water shortage for the Lower Colorado River Basin. The second is the bureau's next step in its demand that the seven states in the river basin come up with a way to voluntarily cut up to 25% of their water usage, or the federal government will do it for them.</p> <p>It was just a year ago that the Department of Interior declared the first shortage on the Colorado River -- a Tier 1. But the past 12 months did not bring enough rain and snow. A report from July shows Lake Mead, which the agency uses to determine shortage conditions, is hovering around 1,040 feet above sea level, after having dropped 10 feet in just two, dry months.</p> <p>The reservoir is at just 27% of its full capacity.</p> <p>Tuesday's report is all but certain to show Lake Mead will be below 1,050 feet come January -- the threshold required to declare a Tier 2 shortage beginning in 2023. The question is how far below that threshold it will be. If the forecast is below 1,045 feet, which recent forecasts would suggest it will be, then mandatory water cuts will expand beyond Arizona, Nevada and Mexico and into California for the first time.</p>

But the growing concern is that the mandatory cuts -- a system that was updated as recently as 2019 -- aren't enough to save the river in the face of a historic, climate change-driven drought. States, water managers and tribes are now back at the negotiating table to figure out how to solve the West's water crisis.

"We thought we were good, but the last few years have been so dry that we realized those tier reductions weren't enough and aren't enough," Bill Hasencamp, the Colorado River resources manager with the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, told CNN. "So the two things we're focused on is how do we get through the next three years without the system crashing, and then how do we develop a long term plan to sustain the Colorado River."

'There's only so much water'

The Colorado River's water was [divvied up among seven states](#) in the West a century ago. The pact gave half of the river's water to the Upper Basin states (Colorado, Utah, Wyoming and New Mexico) and half to the Lower Basin (California, Arizona and Nevada). Mexico -- through which the river flows before it reaches the Gulf of California -- was also guaranteed an allotment.

There was one major problem: Having been written in the 1920s, at a time when precipitation was higher than normal, the pact overestimated how much water the Colorado River carries. It also did not account for the West's booming population growth and its hotter and drier future in the face of the climate crisis.

At a June Senate hearing, Bureau of Reclamation chief Camille Touton laid out a stark warning. In order to stabilize the Colorado River Basin, states and water districts must come up with a plan by August 15 to cut 2 to 4 million acre-feet of water usage by next year. (An acre-foot is the amount of water that would fill one acre a foot deep -- roughly 326,000 gallons.)

Touton's proposed cut is a massive amount -- the high end of the target is about 25% less water than states currently receive. And the low end of the target represents the vast majority of Arizona's yearly allotment of Colorado River water.

Touton also made clear in June that if the states cannot come up with a plan, the federal government will act.

"It is in our authorities to act unilaterally to protect the system, and we will protect the system," she said at the time. "We need to see the work. We need to see the action. Let's get to the table and let's figure this out by August."

But inter-state negotiations are not going well.

John Entsminger, the general manager for the Southern Nevada Water Authority, told CNN that so far not enough of the stakeholders have put forth proposals that would get the basin to Touton's target. He said he hopes the federal government proposes "some pretty strong measures" that could be acted on immediately.

"Frankly, I'm frustrated because the overwhelming sense I've gotten from the negotiations is there aren't enough people taking this seriously enough and understanding this is about adapting to less water in this river," Entsminger said.

Nevada has already moved to cut its metropolitan water usage, banning non-functional turf and paying people for years to remove water-intensive lawns, Entsminger said. But agriculture, which takes up a lot of the water from the river, must be part of the equation as well.

"You have to have a contribution from the sector that uses 80% of the water," he said. "That's not law, politics, it's just math."

	<p>Entsminger said other stakeholders that are hesitant to give up their water allotments need to accept a new reality: The river is running dry, and sacrifices must be made.</p> <p>"It doesn't matter what can be agreed to because there's only so much water, and mother nature will figure this out at some point," he said. "At some point, there's just not water in the river channel."</p> <p>The federal government has not often stepped in and taken control of water management plans from the states, but it has the authority to do so in the Lower Colorado River Basin -- which includes Arizona, southern Nevada and southern California. And experts told CNN the threat of federal action is something states will respond to.</p> <p>"We kind of need the federal government to make some threats to spur action," John Fleck, a Western water expert and professor at the University of New Mexico, told CNN earlier this year. "Progress seems to happen when the federal government comes in and says to states, you need to do this or we're going to do something you don't like."</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/15 CDC updates monkeypox guidance
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2022/08/15/dog-monkeypox/8431660595586/
GIST	<p>Adding yet another wrinkle to the monkeypox outbreak, a new case study suggests that people can pass the virus on to their pet dogs.</p> <p>Therefore, people who are infected with the virus should avoid close contact with their pets, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control now advises in an updated guidance.</p> <p>The change reflects the first documented cases of a pet getting the virus from its owner, according to CBS News. That case happened in France, according to a new paper published in The Lancet.</p> <p>"To the best of our knowledge, the kinetics of symptom onset in both patients and, subsequently, in their dog suggest human-to-dog transmission of monkeypox virus," the researchers concluded in the paper.</p> <p>In this case, a 4-year-old Italian greyhound developed lesions and tested positive for monkeypox 12 days after its owners first showed symptoms. The owners are two male partners who live together but were not sexually exclusive. They routinely allowed their pooch to snooze in their bed.</p> <p>The couple began having symptoms of monkeypox a few days after sleeping with other partners. Both men said once their symptoms started they'd been careful to prevent their dog from coming into contact with other people or pets, CBS News reported.</p> <p>It's not new information that animals can carry monkeypox, but this is the first time a reported case has happened in domestic dogs or cats, the researchers said.</p> <p>It's been long known that wild animals, including rodents and primates, can carry monkeypox in countries where the virus is endemic. Captive primates have also contracted the virus from imported animals in Europe, the researchers noted. They said there's a need for further investigation into secondary monkeypox transmission through pets.</p> <p>"Our findings should prompt debate on the need to isolate pets from monkeypox virus-positive individuals," they wrote.</p> <p>The World Health Organization declared monkeypox virus -- which is now spreading in places where it has not been endemic -- a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on June 23.</p>

	People with monkeypox should avoid close contact with animals, the CDC said, and any pets that have not been exposed to the virus should be cared for by friends or family in another home while the owner recovers.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 UK: Russia's Black Sea Fleet struggling
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russias-black-sea-fleet-struggling-with-effective-sea-control-uk-says-2022-08-16/
GIST	<p>Aug 16 (Reuters) - Britain said on Tuesday that Russia's Black Sea Fleet is currently struggling to exercise effective sea control, with patrols generally limited to the waters within sight of the Crimean coast.</p> <p>The Black Sea Fleet continues to use long-range cruise missiles to support ground offensives but is keeping a defensive posture, the British Defence Ministry said in its daily intelligence bulletin on Twitter.</p> <p>The Black Fleet's currently limited effectiveness undermines Russia's overall invasion strategy, in part because the amphibious threat to Odesa has now been largely neutralised, the intelligence update added.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 China military ship docks in Sri Lanka
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/chinese-military-survey-ship-docks-sri-lanka-port-2022-08-16/
GIST	<p>COLOMBO, Aug 16 (Reuters) - A Chinese military survey ship docked at Sri Lanka's Chinese-built port of Hambantota on Tuesday after a delay of several days because of opposition to the visit from India, which vies with China for influence in crisis-hit Sri Lanka.</p> <p>India had opposed the docking of the Yuan Wang 5, which analysts describe as a high-tech ship for tracking objects in space, as it fears China could use the port, near the main Asia-Europe shipping route, as a military base.</p> <p>Sri Lanka, which needs the support of both India and China as it struggles with its worst economic crisis in decades, initially granted the ship permission for a five-day replenishment stay in Hambantota, from Aug. 11.</p> <p>It later asked China to delay the vessel's arrival, citing the need for more consultations. read more</p> <p>Yuan Wang 5 will now berth for only three days to stock up on fuel, food and other essentials, said an official at the port who declined to be identified as he is not authorised to speak to the media.</p> <p>A Sri Lankan government minister said the island nation was working to ensure there was no friction between friendly countries.</p> <p>"India had raised concerns and Sri Lanka requested a delay in the ship's docking until discussions could be had to resolve these issues," Media Minister Bandula Gunawardana told reporters.</p> <p>"Even before this there have been ships from the U.S., India and other countries coming to Sri Lanka. We have allowed these ships to come. In the same way we have allowed the Chinese ship to dock."</p> <p>China Merchants Port Holdings (0144.HK) signed a 99-year lease in 2017 to operate the deep-sea Hambantota port.</p> <p>Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said the Chinese ship was not interfering with any other country.</p>

	<p>"Yuan Wang 5 conducting maritime research activities ... does not affect any country's security or economic interests and third-parties should not interfere with it," he said in Beijing.</p> <p>Foreign security analysts say the Yuan Wang 5 is one of China's latest-generation space-tracking ships, used to monitor satellite, rocket and intercontinental ballistic missile launches.</p> <p>The Pentagon says the Yuan Wang ships are operated by the Strategic Support Force of the People's Liberation Army.</p> <p>Before the arrival of the ship, India gave Sri Lanka's air force a Dornier 228 aircraft for maritime surveillance.</p> <p>At a handover ceremony, Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe called it the start of cooperation in maritime surveillance between his country's navy and air force and India's navy.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/16 Russia: no need to use nukes in Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/defence-minister-shoigu-says-russia-has-no-need-use-nuclear-weapons-ukraine-2022-08-16/
GIST	<p>MOSCOW, Aug 16 (Reuters) - Russia has "no need" to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine, its defence minister said on Tuesday, describing media speculation that Moscow might deploy nuclear or chemical weapons in the conflict as "absolute lies".</p> <p>"From a military point of view, there is no need to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine to achieve the set goals. The main purpose of Russian nuclear weapons is to deter a nuclear attack," Sergei Shoigu said during a speech at an international security conference in Moscow.</p> <p>"The media are spreading speculation about the alleged use of Russian tactical nuclear weapons in the course of the special military operation, or about the readiness to use chemical weapons. All these informational attacks are absolute lies."</p> <p>Shoigu also alleged Ukrainian military operations were being planned by the United States and Britain, and that NATO had increased its troop deployment in eastern and central Europe "several times over".</p> <p>Referring to the New START Treaty to control U.S. and Russian nuclear arms, Shoigu said talks to extend the treaty were "a two-way street", and the situation around it was "difficult".</p> <p>"A difficult situation is also developing with regard to the Treaty on the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. The agreement remains in force until 2026," Shoigu added.</p> <p>"On the Russian side, obligations are being fulfilled, the declared levels of carriers and warheads are maintained within the established limits."</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/15 Ukraine recruits intense UK military training
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-england-british-army-government-and-politics-28c34fa010b4ba33afdbc344cfda3ef3
GIST	<p>A BRITISH ARMY BASE, England (AP) — A few weeks ago, Serhiy was a business analyst at an IT company. Zakhar was a civil engineer. Now they are soldiers, training to liberate Ukraine from Russia's invasion — but doing it more than 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers) away in Britain.</p> <p>They are among several hundred Ukrainian recruits pounding through an intense form of infantry training at an army base in southeast England. One batch of the 10,000 Ukrainian soldiers that the British military</p>

has pledged to train within 120 days, they are spending several weeks learning skills including marksmanship, battlefield first aid and — crucially for their country’s future — urban warfare.

As the Ukrainians practice house-clearing amid the rattle of gunfire and pall from smoke grenades on a mock-townscape where British soldiers once trained for operations in Northern Ireland, they think about driving Russian troops from the streets of their own cities..

“The most important part is urban training, because it’s the most dangerous combat, in cities,” said Serhiy, who like the other Ukrainians did not want his full name used because of security concerns. “The British instructors have a lot of experience, from Iraq, Afghanistan. We can adapt all this knowledge to the Ukrainian situation and use it to liberate our country from Russian invasion.”

British trainers are putting the Ukrainian troops through a condensed version of the British Army’s infantry training, covering weapons handling, first aid, patrol tactics and the law of conflict. The aim is to turn raw recruits into battle-ready soldiers in a matter of weeks. The first batch arrived last month and have already been sent back to replenish depleted Ukrainian units.

“We are running a basic infantry course, which takes Ukrainian recruits and teaches them to shoot well, to move and communicate well within any tactical environment, and to medicate well,” said Maj. Craig Hutton, a Scots Guards officer helping to oversee the training.

Hutton says many of the Ukrainian troops have little military experience but “they are so motivated. They have a fantastic will to learn, and they just want to practice, practice and practice more.”

More than 1,000 U.K. personnel are involved in the training mission, taking place at four bases around the U.K. Other countries are also sending trainers, including Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the Nordic nations.

Britain is sending the Ukrainians home with new uniforms, body armor, helmets and other gear, part of 2.3 billion pounds’ (\$2.8 billion) worth of U.K. military aid to the country that also includes anti-tank missiles and sophisticated rocket-launch systems.

Zakhar, the former engineer, said it was hard to be away from Ukraine as fighting rages in the eastern Donbas region and in the south.

“I left my parents. I left my brothers and sisters, my relatives, to gain knowledge and experience that will help me ... free our territory from occupiers and invaders,” he said through an interpreter.

Serhiy, the onetime IT worker, has been in uniform for less than a month and is equally determined.

“I know that Ukrainian soldiers are dying to protect our homes right now. So it’s hard to know that I am not with them,” he said. “But the Ukrainian army needs only professional soldiers, so I am ready to train as hard as possible to be ready for the battle ahead.”

Brigadier Justin Stenhouse, who is in charge of the training as commander of the 11th Security Assistance Brigade, said seeing the motivation of the Ukrainians is “humbling.”

But he acknowledged that preparing for the chaos of urban combat is “almost impossible to do in training.” The goal of the mission, he said, is to “train them so they can adapt to survive in those early weeks of combat.”

“They will learn more in the first weeks of combat than we can possibly give them here,” he said.

[Return to Top](#)

SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/interactive/2022/ukraine-road-to-war/?itid=hp_latest-headlines
GIST	<p>On a sunny October morning, the nation's top intelligence, military and diplomatic leaders filed into the Oval Office for an urgent meeting with President Biden. They arrived bearing a highly classified intelligence analysis, compiled from newly obtained satellite images, intercepted communications and human sources, that amounted to Russian President Vladimir Putin's war plans for a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>For months, Biden administration officials had watched warily as Putin massed tens of thousands of troops and lined up tanks and missiles along Ukraine's borders. As summer waned, Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser, had focused on the increasing volume of intelligence related to Russia and Ukraine. He had set up the Oval Office meeting after his own thinking had gone from uncertainty about Russia's intentions, to concern he was being too skeptical about the prospects of military action, to alarm.</p> <p>The session was one of several meetings that officials had about Ukraine that autumn — sometimes gathering in smaller groups — but was notable for the detailed intelligence picture that was presented. Biden and Vice President Harris took their places in armchairs before the fireplace, while Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, joined the directors of national intelligence and the CIA on sofas around the coffee table.</p> <p>Tasked by Sullivan with putting together a comprehensive overview of Russia's intentions, they told Biden that the intelligence on Putin's operational plans, added to ongoing deployments along the border with Ukraine, showed that all the pieces were now in place for a massive assault.</p> <p>The U.S. intelligence community had penetrated multiple points of Russia's political leadership, spying apparatus and military, from senior levels to the front lines, according to U.S. officials.</p> <p>Much more radical than Moscow's 2014 annexation of Crimea and instigation of a separatist movement in eastern Ukraine, Putin's war plans envisioned a takeover of most of the country.</p> <p>Using mounted maps on easels in front of the Resolute Desk, Milley showed Russian troop positions and the Ukrainian terrain they intended to conquer. It was a plan of staggering audacity, one that could pose a direct threat to NATO's eastern flank, or even destroy the post-World War II security architecture of Europe.</p> <p>As he absorbed the briefing, Biden, who had taken office promising to keep the country out of new wars, was determined that Putin must either be deterred or confronted, and that the United States must not act alone. Yet NATO was far from unified on how to deal with Moscow, and U.S. credibility was weak. After a disastrous occupation of Iraq, the chaos that followed the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, and four years of President Donald Trump seeking to undermine the alliance, it was far from certain that Biden could effectively lead a Western response to an expansionist Russia.</p> <p>Ukraine was a troubled former Soviet republic with a history of corruption, and the U.S. and allied answer to earlier Russian aggression there had been uncertain and divided. When the invasion came, the Ukrainians would need significant new weaponry to defend themselves. Too little could guarantee a Russian victory. But too much might provoke a direct NATO conflict with nuclear-armed Russia.</p> <p>This account, in previously unreported detail, shines new light on the uphill climb to restore U.S. credibility, the attempt to balance secrecy around intelligence with the need to persuade others of its truth, and the challenge of determining how the world's most powerful military alliance would help a less-than-perfect democracy on Russia's border defy an attack without NATO firing a shot.</p> <p>The first in a series of articles examining the road to war and the military campaign in Ukraine, it is drawn from in-depth interviews with more than three dozen senior U.S., Ukrainian, European and NATO officials about a global crisis whose end is yet to be determined. Some spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence and internal deliberations.</p>

The Kremlin did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

As Milley laid out the array of forces on that October morning, he and the others summed up Putin's intentions. "We assess that they plan to conduct a significant strategic attack on Ukraine from multiple directions simultaneously," Milley told the president. "Their version of 'shock and awe.' "

According to the intelligence, the Russians would come from the north, on either side of Kyiv. One force would move east of the capital through the Ukrainian city of Chernihiv, while the other would flank Kyiv on the west, pushing southward from Belarus through a natural gap between the "exclusion zone" at the abandoned Chernobyl nuclear plant and surrounding marshland. The attack would happen in the winter so that the hard earth would make the terrain easily passable for tanks. Forming a pincer around the capital, Russian troops planned to seize Kyiv in three to four days. The Spetsnaz, their special forces, would find and remove President Volodymyr Zelensky, killing him if necessary, and install a Kremlin-friendly puppet government.

Separately, Russian forces would come from the east and drive through central Ukraine to the Dnieper River, while troops from Crimea took over the southeastern coast. Those actions could take several weeks, the Russian plans predicted.

After pausing to regroup and rearm, they would next push westward, toward a north-south line stretching from Moldova to western Belarus, leaving a rump Ukrainian state in the west — an area that in Putin's calculus was populated by irredeemable neo-Nazi Russophobes.

The United States had obtained "extraordinary detail" about the Kremlin's secret plans for a war it continued to deny it intended, Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines later explained. They included not only the positioning of troops and weaponry and operational strategy, but also fine points such as Putin's "unusual and sharp increases in funding for military contingency operations and for building up reserve forces even as other pressing needs, such as pandemic response, were under-resourced," she said. This was no mere exercise in intimidation, unlike a large-scale Russian deployment in April, when Putin's forces had menaced Ukraine's borders but never attacked.

Some in the White House found it hard to wrap their minds around the scale of the Russian leader's ambitions.

"It did not seem like the kind of thing that a rational country would undertake," one participant in the meeting later said of the planned occupation of most of a country of 232,000 square miles and nearly 45 million people. Parts of Ukraine were deeply anti-Russian, raising the specter of an insurgency even if Putin toppled the government in Kyiv. And yet the intelligence showed that more and more troops were arriving and settling in for a full campaign. Munitions, food and crucial supplies were being deposited at Russian encampments.

Biden pressed his advisers. Did they really think that this time Putin was likely to strike?

Yes, they affirmed. This is real. Although the administration would publicly insist over the next several months that it did not believe Putin had made a final decision, the only thing his team couldn't tell the president that autumn day was exactly when the Russian president would pull the trigger.

CIA Director William J. Burns, who had served as U.S. ambassador to Moscow and had had the most direct interactions with Putin of anyone in the Biden administration, described the Russian leader to the others as fixated on Ukraine. Control over the country was synonymous with Putin's concept of Russian identity and authority. The precision of the war planning, coupled with Putin's conviction that Ukraine should be reabsorbed by the motherland, left him with no doubts that Putin was prepared to invade.

"I believed he was quite serious," Burns said months later, recalling the briefing.

II

The intelligence had underscored the promise of Putin's own words. Three months earlier, in July, he had published a 7,000-word essay, "On the Historical Unity Between Russians and Ukrainians," suffused with grievance and dubious assertions. Russians and Ukrainians, he argued, were "one people" — an idea rooted in Putin's claims about "blood ties" — and Moscow had been "robbed" of its own territory by a scheming West.

"I am confident that true sovereignty of Ukraine is possible only in partnership with Russia," Putin wrote.

Just weeks before the essay appeared, Biden and Putin had held a June 16 summit that both declared was "constructive." At that point, Ukraine was a concern, but one that White House officials felt could be dealt with. As the White House delegation left the meeting, held in Geneva, a senior Biden aide would later recall, "we didn't get on the plane and come home and think the world was on the cusp of a major war in Europe."

But Putin's subsequent publication "caught our attention in a big way," Sullivan later said. "We began to look at what's going on here, what's his end game? How hard is he going to push?" As a precaution, on Aug. 27, Biden authorized that \$60 million in largely defensive weapons be drawn from U.S. inventories and sent to Ukraine.

By late summer, as they pieced together the intelligence from the border and from Moscow, analysts who had spent their careers studying Putin were increasingly convinced the Russian leader — himself a former intelligence officer — saw a window of opportunity closing. Ukrainians had already twice risen up to demand a democratic future, free from corruption and Moscow's interference, during the 2004-2005 Orange Revolution, and the 2013-2014 Maidan protests that preceded Russia's annexation of Crimea.

While not a member of NATO or the European Union, Ukraine was now moving steadily into the Western political, economic and cultural orbit. That drift fed Putin's broader resentment about Russia's loss of empire.

In a grim actuarial assessment, the analysts concluded that Putin, who was about to turn 69, understood that he was running out of time to cement his legacy as one of Russia's great leaders — the one who had restored Russian preeminence on the Eurasian continent.

The analysts said Putin calculated that any Western response to an attempt to reclaim Ukraine by force would be big on outrage but limited in actual punishment. The Russian leader, they said, believed that the Biden administration was chastened by the humiliating U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and wanted to avoid new wars. The United States and Europe were still struggling through the coronavirus pandemic. German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the de facto European leader, was leaving office and handing power to an untested successor. French President Emmanuel Macron was facing a reelection battle against a resurgent right wing, and Britain was suffering from a post-Brexit economic downturn. Large parts of the continent depended on Russian oil and natural gas, which Putin thought he could use as a wedge to split the Western alliance. He had built up hundreds of billions of dollars in cash reserves and was confident the Russian economy could weather the inevitable sanctions, as it had in the past.

Presented with the new intelligence and analysis at the October briefing, Biden "basically had two reactions," Sullivan said. First, to try to deter Putin, they "needed to send somebody to Moscow to sit with the Russians at a senior level and tell them: 'If you do this, these will be the consequences.' "

Second, they needed to brief allies on the U.S. intelligence and bring them on board with what the administration believed should be a unified and severe posture of threatened sanctions against Russia, reinforcement and expansion of NATO defenses, and assistance for Ukraine.

Burns was dispatched to Moscow and Haines to NATO headquarters in Brussels.

Months later, Milley still carried in his briefcase note cards encapsulating the U.S. interests and strategic objectives discussed at the October briefing. He could recite them off the top of his head.

Problem: “How do you underwrite and enforce the rules-based international order” against a country with extraordinary nuclear capability, “without going to World War III?”

No. 1: “Don’t have a kinetic conflict between the U.S. military and NATO with Russia.” No. 2: “Contain war inside the geographical boundaries of Ukraine.” No. 3: “Strengthen and maintain NATO unity.” No. 4: “Empower Ukraine and give them the means to fight.”

Biden’s advisers were confident Ukraine would put up a fight. The United States, Britain and other NATO members had spent years training and equipping the Ukrainian military, which was more professional and better organized than before Russia’s assault on Crimea and the eastern region of Donbas seven years earlier. But the training had focused nearly as much on how to mount internal resistance after a Russian occupation as on how to prevent it in the first place. The weapons they had supplied were primarily small-bore and defensive so that they wouldn’t be seen as a Western provocation.

The administration also had grave concerns about Ukraine’s young president, a former television comic who had come into office on a huge wave of popular support and desire for fundamental change but had lost public standing in part because he failed to make good on a promise to make peace with Russia. Zelensky, 44, appeared to be no match for the ruthless Putin.

Math was not in Ukraine’s favor. Russia had more troops, more tanks, more artillery, more fighter jets and guided missiles, and had demonstrated in previous conflicts its willingness to pummel its weaker adversaries into submission, with no regard for the loss of civilian lives.

Kyiv might not fall as quickly as the Russians expected, the Americans concluded, but it would fall.

III

On Nov. 2, Burns was escorted into the Kremlin office of Yuri Ushakov, Putin’s foreign policy adviser and a former ambassador to the United States. Ushakov’s boss was on the other end of a phone line and spoke to Burns from the resort city of Sochi, where he had retreated during another wave of coronavirus infections in Moscow.

The Russian leader recited his usual complaints about NATO expansion, the threat to Russian security, and illegitimate leadership in Ukraine.

“He was very dismissive of President Zelensky as a political leader,” Burns recalled.

Practiced at listening to Putin’s tirades from his years in Moscow, Burns delivered his own forceful message: The United States knows what you’re up to, and if you invade Ukraine, you will pay a huge price. He said he was leaving a letter from Biden, affirming the punishing consequences of any Russian attack on Ukraine.

Putin “was very matter-of-fact,” Burns said. He didn’t deny the intelligence that pointed toward a Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The CIA director also met with another of Putin’s advisers, Nikolai Patrushev, an ex-KGB officer, from Putin’s hometown of St. Petersburg, who ran Russia’s Security Council.

Patrushev had thought Burns flew to Moscow to discuss the next meeting between Putin and Biden and seemed surprised that the CIA chief had come bearing a warning about Ukraine.

He almost exactly echoed Putin’s grievances about history and NATO in his discussions with Burns. There seemed to be no room for meaningful engagement, and it left the CIA director to wonder if Putin

and his tight circle of aides had formed their own echo chamber. Putin had not made an irreversible decision to go to war, but his views on Ukraine had hardened, his appetite for risk had grown, and the Russian leader believed his moment of opportunity would soon pass.

“My level of concern has gone up, not down,” the spy chief reported back to Biden.

IV

As Burns was speaking with Putin, Blinken was sitting down with Zelensky, in Glasgow, Scotland, on the sidelines of an international summit on climate change. He laid out the intelligence picture and described the Russian storm that was heading Ukraine’s way.

“It was just the two of us, two feet from each other,” Blinken recalled. It was a “difficult conversation.”

Blinken had met before with the Ukrainian president and thought he knew him well enough to speak candidly, although it seemed surreal to be “telling someone you believe their country is going to be invaded.”

He found Zelensky “serious, deliberate, stoic,” a combination of belief and disbelief. He said he would brief his senior teams. But the Ukrainians had “seen a number of Russian feints in the past,” Blinken knew, and Zelensky was clearly worried about economic collapse if his country panicked.

Blinken’s presentation, and Zelensky’s skepticism, set a pattern that would be repeated both privately and in public over the next several months. The Ukrainians could not afford to reject U.S. intelligence wholesale. But from their perspective, the information was speculative.

Zelensky heard the U.S. warnings, he later recalled, but said the Americans weren’t offering the kinds of weapons Ukraine needed to defend itself.

“You can say a million times, ‘Listen, there may be an invasion.’ Okay, there may be an invasion — will you give us planes?” Zelensky said. “Will you give us air defenses? ‘Well, you’re not a member of NATO.’ Oh, okay, then what are we talking about?”

The Americans offered little specific intelligence to support their warnings “until the last four or five days before the invasion began,” according to Dmytro Kuleba, Zelensky’s foreign minister.

Less than two weeks after the Glasgow meeting, when Kuleba and Andriy Yermak, Zelensky’s chief of staff, visited the State Department in Washington, a senior U.S. official greeted them with a cup of coffee and a smile. “Guys, dig the trenches!” the official began.

“When we smiled back,” Kuleba recalled, the official said, “‘I’m serious. Start digging trenches. ... You will be attacked. A large-scale attack, and you have to prepare for it.’ We asked for details; there were none.”

If the Americans became frustrated at Ukraine’s skepticism about Russia’s plans, the Ukrainians were no less disconcerted at the increasingly public U.S. warnings that an invasion was coming.

“We had to strike a balance between realistically assessing the risks and preparing the country for the worst ... and keeping the country running economically and financially,” Kuleba said. “Every comment coming from the United States about the unavoidability of war was immediately reflected in the [Ukrainian] currency exchange rate.”

A number of U.S. officials have disputed Ukrainian recollections, saying they provided the Kyiv government with specific intelligence early on and throughout the lead-up to the invasion.

Yet when it came to Ukraine, U.S. intelligence was hardly an open book. Official guidance prohibited the spy agencies from sharing tactical information that Ukraine could use to launch offensive attacks on Russian troop locations in Crimea or against Kremlin-backed separatists in the east.

Ukraine's own intelligence apparatus was also shot through with Russian moles, and U.S. officials were leery of sensitive information ending up in Moscow's hands. After the war began, the Biden administration changed its policy and shared information on Russian troop movements throughout Ukraine, on the grounds that the country was now defending itself from an invasion.

V

At a side meeting during the Group of 20 conference in Rome at the end of October, Biden shared some of the new intelligence and conclusions with America's closest allies — the leaders of Britain, France and Germany.

In mid-November, Haines used a previously scheduled trip to Brussels to brief a wider circle of allies: NATO's North Atlantic Council, the principal decision-making body of the 30-member alliance. Speaking in a large auditorium, she limited her remarks to what the intelligence community believed the evidence showed, and didn't offer policy recommendations.

"A number of members raised questions and were skeptical of the idea that President Putin was seriously preparing for the possibility of a large-scale invasion," Haines recalled.

French and German officials couldn't understand why Putin would try to invade and occupy a large country with just the 80,000 to 90,000 troops believed to be massed on the border. Satellite imagery also showed the troops moving back and forth from the frontier. Others posited that the Russians were performing an exercise, as the Kremlin itself insisted, or playing a shell game designed to conceal a purpose short of invasion.

Most were doubtful, and noted that Zelensky seemed to think Russia would never attack with the ambition and force the Americans were forecasting. Didn't Ukraine understand Russia's intentions best?

Only the British and the Baltic states were fully on board. At one point, an official from London stood up and gestured toward Haines. "She's right," the official said.

But Paris and Berlin remembered emphatic U.S. claims about intelligence on Iraq. The shadow of that deeply flawed analysis hung over all the discussions before the invasion. Some also felt that Washington, just months earlier, had vastly overestimated the resilience of Afghanistan's government as the U.S. military was withdrawing. The government had collapsed as soon as the Taliban entered Kabul.

"American intelligence is not considered to be a naturally reliable source," said François Heisbourg, a security expert and longtime adviser to French officials. "It was considered to be prone to political manipulation."

The Europeans began to settle into camps that would change little for several months.

"I think there were basically three flavors," a senior administration official said. To many in Western Europe, what the Russians were doing was "all coercive diplomacy, [Putin] was just building up to see what he could get. He's not going to invade ... it's crazy."

Many of NATO's newer members in eastern and southeastern Europe thought Putin "may do something, but it would be limited in scope," the official said, " ... another bite at the [Ukrainian] apple," similar to what happened in 2014.

But Britain and the Baltic states, which were always nervous about Russian intentions, believed a full-scale invasion was coming.

When skeptical member states asked for more intelligence, the Americans provided some, but held back from sharing it all.

Historically, the United States rarely revealed its most sensitive intelligence to an organization as diverse as NATO, primarily for fear that secrets could leak. While the Americans and their British partners did share a significant amount of information, they withheld the raw intercepts or nature of the human sources that were essential to determining Putin's plans. That especially frustrated French and German officials, who had long suspected that Washington and London sometimes hid the basis of their intelligence to make it seem more definitive than it really was.

Some of the alliance countries provided their own findings, Haines said. The United States also created new mechanisms for sharing information in real time with their foreign partners in Brussels. Austin, Blinken and Milley were on the phone to their counterparts, sharing, listening, cajoling.

Over time, one senior European official at NATO recalled, "the intelligence was narrated repeatedly, consistently, clearly, credibly, in a lot of detail with a very good script and supporting evidence. I don't remember one key moment where the lightbulb went off" in the months-long effort to convince the allies, the official said. Ultimately, "it was the volume of the lights in the room."

VI

Macron and Merkel had been dealing with Putin for years and found it hard to believe he was so irrational as to launch a calamitous war. In the weeks after Biden's Geneva meeting, they had tried to arrange an E.U.-Russia summit, only to be shot down by skeptical members of the bloc who saw it as a dangerous concession to Russia's aggressive posture.

Months later, despite the new U.S. intelligence, the French and Germans insisted there was a chance for diplomacy. The Americans and the British had little hope that any diplomatic effort would pay off, but were prepared to keep the door open — if the Europeans gave something in return.

"A big part of our focus," recalled Sullivan, "was basically to say to them, 'Look, we'll take the diplomatic track and treat it [as] serious ... if you will take the planning for [military] force posture and sanctions seriously.'"

Each side was convinced it was right but was willing to proceed as if it might be wrong.

Over the next several months, the Americans strove to show the Western Europeans and others that they were still willing to search for a peaceful resolution, even though in the back of their minds, they were convinced that any Russian efforts at negotiation were a charade. "It basically worked," Sullivan said of the administration strategy.

On Dec. 7, Putin and Biden spoke on a video call. Putin claimed that the eastward expansion of the Western alliance was a major factor in his decision to send troops to Ukraine's border. Russia was simply protecting its own interests and territorial integrity, he argued.

Biden responded that Ukraine was unlikely to join NATO any time soon, and that the United States and Russia could come to agreements on other concerns Russia had about the placement of U.S. weapons systems in Europe. In theory, there was room to compromise.

For a while, as Blinken headed the U.S. diplomatic effort with repeated visits to NATO capitals and alliance headquarters in Brussels, the Ukrainians continued their contacts with European governments that still seemed far less convinced of Putin's intentions than the Americans were.

Kuleba and others in the government believed there would be a war, the Ukrainian foreign minister later said. But until the eve of the invasion, "I could not believe that we would face a war of such scale. The

only country in the world that was persistently telling us” with such certainty “that there would be missile strikes was the United States of America. ... Every other country was not sharing this analysis and [instead was] saying, yes, war is possible, but it will be rather a localized conflict in the east of Ukraine.”

“Put yourself in our shoes,” Kuleba said. “You have, on the one hand, the U.S. telling you something completely unimaginable, and everyone else blinking an eye to you and saying this is not what we think is going to happen.”

In fact, the British and some Baltic officials believed a full invasion was probable. But Kuleba was far from alone in his skepticism. His president shared it, according to Zelensky’s aides and other officials who briefed him.

“We took all of the information that our Western partners were giving us seriously,” recalled Yermak, Zelensky’s chief of staff. “But let’s be honest: Imagine if all of this panic that so many people were pushing had taken place. Creating panic is a method of the Russians. ... Imagine if this panic had started three or four months beforehand. What would’ve happened to the economy? Would we have been able to hold on for five months like we have?”

VII

In early January, Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman led a diplomatic delegation to Geneva and met with Sergei Ryabkov, her Russian counterpart, whom she knew well. He reiterated Moscow’s position on Ukraine, formally offered in mid-December in two proposed treaties — that NATO must end its expansion plans and halt any activity in countries that had joined the alliance after 1997, which included Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and the Baltic states.

Rejecting the proposal to close NATO’s doors and reduce the status of existing members, the administration instead offered talks and trust-building measures in a number of security areas, including the deployment of troops and the placement of weapons on NATO’s eastern flank along the border with Russia. The offer was conditioned on de-escalation of the military threat to Ukraine. Ryabkov told Sherman that Russia was disappointed in the American attitude.

The White House had envisioned Sherman’s meeting with Ryabkov as “a chance to test whether the Russians were serious about the substance of the concerns ... and if there was a way forward for any kind of diplomacy,” said Emily Horne, then the spokesperson for the National Security Council. “I think it became pretty clear, pretty quickly that [the Russians] were performing diplomacy, not actually undertaking diplomacy. They weren’t even doing it with much seriousness.”

“All the Western allies wanted to convey that there was an alternative path involving dialogue and respect for Russia as a great power,” said a senior British government official involved in negotiations. “What became increasingly clear was that Russia was not interested in those.”

As the United States pursued the diplomatic track, it also positioned forces to defend NATO, all of them visible to Moscow and to Europeans and demonstrating American willingness to put skin in the game. While Biden repeatedly said there would be no U.S. troops in Ukraine, the Pentagon increased pre-positioned weapons stocks in Poland and moved a helicopter battalion there from Greece. Paratroops from the 171st Airborne were deployed to the Baltic states. More troops were sent from Italy to eastern Romania, and others went to Hungary and Bulgaria.

Over the next several months, the U.S. military presence in Europe increased from 74,000 to 100,000 troops. Four airborne fighter squadrons became 12, and the number of surface combatant ships in the region increased from five to 26. Combat air patrols and surveillance were flying 24/7 missions over the alliance’s eastern flank, with visibility deep inside Ukraine.

“We were saying, ‘Look, we’re taking diplomacy seriously, but we’re so worried about this that we’re actually moving men and material,’ ” Sullivan recalled.

With National Security Agency authorization, the United States established a direct communication line from the Ukrainian military to U.S. European Command. The highly secure system would keep the Americans in direct contact with their Ukrainian counterparts as events unfolded.

The administration was also sending arms to Ukraine. In December, Biden authorized an additional \$200 million in weapons to be drawn from U.S. inventories — even as the Kyiv government, many in Congress and some within the administration itself argued that if the United States really believed a full-scale invasion was coming, it was not enough.

But every step in the administration campaign was premised on avoiding direct U.S. involvement in a military clash. The overriding White House concern about provocation influenced each decision about how much assistance and what kind of weapons to give the Ukrainians to defend themselves.

“I make no apologies for the fact that one of our objectives here is to avoid direct conflict with Russia,” Sullivan said of the prewar period.

The Russians were going to do what they did regardless of what the allies did, a senior official involved in the decisions said, and the administration found “incredible” the notion, as some later argued in hindsight, that “if only we would have given” the Ukrainians more arms, “none of this would have happened.”

Determining whether Russia would interpret a military exercise or a weapons shipment as provocative or escalatory was “more art than science,” the official said. “There’s not a clear and easy mathematical formula. ... There has always been a balance between what is required to effectively defend, and what is going to be seen by Russia as the United States essentially underwriting the killing of huge numbers of Russians.”

Ukrainian officials have expressed unending gratitude to the United States for what it has provided since the start of the war. “No other country in the world did more for Ukraine to get the necessary weapons than the United States since 24 February. No other country in the world,” Kuleba said recently. But from the beginning, he said, he and other Ukrainian officials have believed that the “non-provocation” strategy was the wrong one.

“Where did it take us to?” Kuleba said. “I think this war — with thousands killed and wounded, territories lost, part of the economy destroyed ... is the best answer to those who still advocate the non-provocation of Russia.”

VIII

As part of its ongoing campaign to convince the world of what was coming — and dissuade the Russians — the White House decided toward the end of 2021 to challenge its own reluctance, and that of the intelligence agencies, to make some of their most sensitive information public.

U.S. intelligence had picked up on “false flag” operations planned by the Russians, in which they would stage attacks on their own forces as if they had come from Ukraine. Publicly exposing those plans might deny Putin the opportunity to concoct a pretext for invasion, administration officials reasoned.

As a first step, the White House decided to reveal the scale of the troop buildup that continued on Ukraine’s borders. In early December, the administration released satellite photos, as well a map created by U.S. analysts showing Russian troop positions and an intelligence community analysis of Russian planning.

The analysis said the Russians planned “extensive movement” of 100 battalion tactical groups, involving up to 175,000 troops, along with armor, artillery and equipment. The picture that administration officials had been developing for weeks in secret was now seen around the world.

In anticipation of more selective disclosures of intelligence, Sullivan set up a regular process at the White House in which a team would determine whether a particular piece of information, if made public, could thwart Russian plans or propaganda. If the answer was yes, it would then be submitted to the intelligence community for recommendations on whether and how to release it.

In late January, the British government publicly accused Russia of plotting to install a puppet regime in Kyiv. The allegation, based on U.S. and British intelligence, was revealed in a highly unusual press statement by Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, late in the evening in London but just in time for the Sunday morning papers.

And in early February, the Biden administration disclosed that Moscow was considering filming a fake Ukrainian attack against Russian territory or Russian-speaking people — the false flag that intelligence had detected. The propaganda film would be heavy on spectacle, officials said, with graphic scenes of explosions, accompanied by corpses posed as victims and mourners pretending to grieve for the dead.

“I had watched Putin falsely set the narrative too many times,” another U.S. official said. Now, “you could see him planning quite specifically in [eastern Ukraine] false flags. It was quite precise.”

The intelligence disclosures themselves had an air of theatricality. The initial revelation of satellite pictures could be corroborated by commercial footage, though the analysis was unique to the intelligence community. But whether the public believed the subsequent disclosures depended on the government’s credibility. And Biden administration officials knew they faced a public, at home and abroad, that could be deeply skeptical of “intelligence,” following the Iraq War and the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan.

Broadly speaking, the U.S. public information campaign worked. World attention focused on the Russian troop buildup. The idea that Putin would falsify the reasons for his invasion seemed plausible, perhaps because in 2014 he had denied entirely that his troops were in Crimea, an assertion that led to descriptions of “little green men” in military uniforms without insignia occupying part of Ukraine.

Given how skeptical some allies remained about the intelligence, the most powerful effect of disclosing it was to shape Russian behavior and deprive Putin of the power to use misinformation, U.S. officials said.

IX

On Jan. 12, Burns met in Kyiv with Zelensky and delivered a candid assessment. The intelligence picture had only become clearer that Russia intended to make a lightning strike on Kyiv and decapitate the central government. The United States had also discovered a key piece of battlefield planning: Russia would try to land its forces first at the airport in Hostomel, a suburb of the capital, where the runways could accommodate massive Russian transports carrying troops and weapons. The assault on Kyiv would begin there.

At one point in their conversation, Zelensky asked if he or his family were personally in danger. Burns said Zelensky needed to take his personal security seriously.

The risks to the president were growing. Intelligence at the time indicated that Russian assassination teams might already be in Kyiv, waiting to be activated.

But Zelensky resisted calls to relocate his government and was adamant that he not panic the public. Down that path, he thought, lay defeat.

“You can’t simply say to me, ‘Listen, you should start to prepare people now and tell them they need to put away money, they need to store up food,’ ” Zelensky recalled. “If we had communicated that — and that is what some people wanted, who I will not name — then I would have been losing \$7 billion a month since last October, and at the moment when the Russians did attack, they would have taken us in three days. ... Generally, our inner sense was right: If we sow chaos among people before the invasion, the Russians will devour us. Because during chaos, people flee the country.”

For Zelensky, the decision to keep people in the country, where they could fight to defend their homes, was the key to repelling any invasion.

“As cynical as it may sound, those are the people who stopped everything,” he said.

Ukrainian officials remained irritated that the Americans weren’t sharing more about their intelligence sources. “The information that we received was, I would call it, a statement of facts without a disclosure of the origins of those facts or of the background behind those facts,” Kuleba recalled.

But Western intelligence wasn’t alone in thinking Zelensky should prepare for a full-scale invasion. Some of Ukraine’s own intelligence officials, while still skeptical that Putin would strike, were planning for the worst. Kyrylo Budanov, Ukraine’s military intelligence chief, said he moved the archives out of his headquarters three months in advance of the war and prepared reserves of fuel and ammunition.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, left, in Jan. 21 meeting in Geneva with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov (not shown). (Emily Sabens/The Washington Post; Anadolu Agency/Getty; iStock)
The American warnings were repeated on Jan. 19 when Blinken made a brief visit to Kyiv for a face-to-face meeting with Zelensky and Kuleba. To the secretary’s dismay, Zelensky continued to argue that any public call for mobilization would bring panic, as well as capital flight that would push Ukraine’s already teetering economy over the edge.

While Blinken stressed, as he had in previous conversations, the importance of keeping Zelensky and his government safe and intact, he was one of several senior U.S. officials who rebuffed reports that the administration had urged them to evacuate the capital. “What we said to Ukraine were two things,” Blinken later recalled. “We will support you whatever you want to do. We recommend you look ... at how you can ensure continuity of government operations depending on what happens.” That could mean hunkering down in Kyiv, relocating to western Ukraine or moving the government to neighboring Poland.

Zelensky told Blinken he was staying.

He had begun to suspect that some Western officials wanted him to flee so that Russia could install a puppet government that would come to a negotiated settlement with NATO powers. “The Western partners wanted to — I’m sure someone was really worried about what would happen to me and my family,” Zelensky said. “But someone probably wanted to just end things faster. I think the majority of people who called me — well, almost everyone — did not have faith that Ukraine can stand up to this and persevere.”

Similarly, warning Ukrainians to prepare for war as some partners wanted him to, he said, would have weakened the country economically and made it easier for the Russians to capture. “Let people discuss in the future whether it was right or not right,” the Ukrainian leader recalled, “but I definitely know and intuitively — we discussed this every day at the National Security and Defense Council, et cetera — I had the feeling that [the Russians] wanted to prepare us for a soft surrender of the country. And that’s scary.”

X

In a news conference on Jan. 19, Biden said he thought Russia would invade. Putin had come too far to pull back. “He has to do something,” the president said.

Biden promised that the West would answer Russia’s attack. “Our allies and partners are ready to impose severe costs and significant harm on Russia and the Russian economy,” he said, predicting that if Putin ordered an invasion, it would prove a “disaster” for Russia.

It was one of Biden’s most forceful warnings to that point. But the president also muddied the waters, suggesting that a “minor incursion” by Russian forces, as opposed to a full-scale invasion, might not prompt the severe response that he and allies had threatened.

“It’s one thing if it’s a minor incursion, and then we end up having to fight about what to do and not do, et cetera,” Biden said, signaling that NATO was not unified in its opposition to any Russian use of force. “If there’s something where there’s Russian forces crossing the border, killing Ukrainian fighters, et cetera, I think that changes everything,” Biden said when, later in the news conference, a reporter asked him to clarify what he meant by a “minor incursion.”

“But it depends on what he [Putin] does, actually, what extent we’re going to be able to get total unity on the NATO front.”

Biden’s comments revealed the cracks in his own administration’s planning, as well as in NATO. Blinken was in Kyiv, vowing that the United States would support Ukraine, in every way short of committing its own forces, if the country was attacked. But privately, administration officials had been contemplating for weeks how they would respond to a “hybrid” attack, in which Russia might launch damaging cyber-strikes on Ukraine and a limited assault on the eastern part of the country.

Zelensky and his aides, who still weren’t convinced Putin would go to war, replied to Biden’s comments about a “minor incursion” with a caustic tweet.

“We want to remind the great powers that there are no minor incursions and small nations. Just as there are no minor casualties and little grief from the loss of loved ones. I say this as the President of a great power.”

Biden clarified the next day that if “any assembled Russian units move across the Ukrainian border, that is an invasion” for which Putin will pay. But White House officials quietly fumed that while the administration was trying to rally support for Ukraine, Zelensky was more interested in poking the president in the eye over an awkward comment.

“It was frustrating,” said a former White House official. “We were taking steps that were attempting to help him, and there was a feeling that he was protecting his own political brand by either being in denial or projecting confidence because that’s what was important to him at the time.”

An aide to Zelensky who helped craft the tweet said it was meant to rebut Biden, but also to be light and humorous, a way to defuse the burgeoning tension. Zelensky’s inner circle worried that Washington’s predictions that war was around the corner would have unintended consequences.

As Biden was clarifying, Zelensky’s team tried to assuage Washington with a conciliatory message.

“Thank you @POTUS for the unprecedented [U.S.] diplomatic and military assistance for [Ukraine],” Zelensky tweeted, with emoji of the U.S. and Ukrainian flags.

XI

Jan. 21 was a cold, bleak day in Geneva, with gusty winds whipping the surface of the usually placid lake that shares the Swiss city’s name. As Blinken and his aides sat across from their Russian counterparts at a table set up in the ballroom of a shoreline luxury hotel, the secretary offered the whitecaps as a metaphor. Perhaps, Blinken told Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, they could calm the turbulent waters between their two countries.

They exchanged tense niceties and covered other issues — a spat about the size and activities of their embassies in each other’s capital, the Iran nuclear deal — before turning to Ukraine. Blinken again laid out U.S. positions. If Putin had legitimate security concerns, the United States and its allies were ready to talk about them. But once an invasion of Ukraine began, Western sanctions would be fast and merciless, isolating Russia and crippling its economy, and the alliance would provide Ukraine with massive military assistance. If one Russian soldier or missile touched one inch of NATO territory, the United States would defend its allies.

Blinken found Lavrov's responses strident and unyielding. After an hour and a half of fruitless back-and-forth, it seemed there was little more to say. But as their aides began to file out of the ballroom, Blinken held back and asked the Russian minister to speak with him alone. The two men entered a small, adjacent conference room and shut the door as the U.S. and Russian teams stood uncomfortably together outside.

During Lavrov's nearly 18 as Russia's foreign minister, a succession of American diplomats had found him blunt and doctrinaire, but occasionally frank and realistic about relations between their two countries. After again going over the Ukraine situation, Blinken stopped and asked, "Sergei, tell me what it is you're really trying to do?" Was this all really about the security concerns Russia had raised again and again — about NATO's "encroachment" toward Russia and a perceived military threat? Or was it about Putin's almost theological belief that Ukraine was and always had been an integral part of Mother Russia?

Without answering, Lavrov opened the door and walked away, his staff trailing behind.

It was the last time top national security officials of Russia and the United States would meet in person before the invasion.

Biden spoke with Putin once more by telephone. On Feb. 12, the White House said, he told the Russian president that "while the United States remains prepared to engage in diplomacy, in full coordination with our allies and partners, we are equally prepared for other scenarios."

XII

A day earlier, British Defense Minister Ben Wallace had flown to Moscow to meet with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Shoigu, a longtime Kremlin survivor who helped sculpt Putin's tough-guy persona.

Wallace wanted to ask one more time if there was room for negotiation on Putin's demands about NATO expansion and alliance activities in Eastern Europe. The Russians, he said, showed no interest in engaging.

Wallace warned Shoigu that Russia would face fierce resistance if it invaded Ukraine. "I know the Ukrainians — I visited Ukraine five times — and they will fight."

"My mother's Ukrainian," Wallace said Shoigu replied, implying that he knew the people better. "It's all part of our same country."

Wallace then raised the prospect of sanctions. Shoigu responded: " 'We can suffer like no one else.' And I said, 'I don't want anyone to suffer.' "

Shoigu aired a long and by now familiar list of complaints and said Russia couldn't tolerate Ukraine's Western trajectory. "It was in some respects incomprehensible," said a British official who attended the meeting. "Everyone wanted to keep negotiations going — we were throwing off-ramps, but they weren't taking them."

As the British officials were about to leave, Shoigu spoke directly to Wallace. "He looked me in the eye and said, 'We have no plans to invade Ukraine' " Wallace recalled. "That shows you how much of a lie it was."

British Defense Minister Ben Wallace, right, with Russian counterpart Sergei Shoigu. (Emily Sabens/The Washington Post; Tim Hammond/MoD Crown Copyright/Getty; iStock)

A week later, on Feb. 18, Biden called the leaders of several NATO allies and told them the latest U.S. analysis. Biden told reporters in the Roosevelt Room at the White House later that day, "As of this moment, I'm convinced he's made the decision" to invade. "We have reason to believe that."

The French, however, continued to seek a way out of the crisis.

On Feb. 20, Macron called Putin and asked him to agree to a meeting in Geneva with Biden. The conversation led the French president to believe that Putin was finally willing to seek a settlement.

“It’s a proposal that merits to be taken into account,” Putin said, according to a recording of the conversation aired months later in a France TV documentary, “A President, Europe and War.”

Macron pressed the Russian leader. “But can we say, today, at the end of this conversation, that we agree in principle? I would like a clear answer from you on that score. I understand your resistance to setting a date. But are you ready to move forward and say, today, ‘I would like a [face-to-face] meeting with the Americans, then expanded to the Europeans’? Or not?”

Putin didn’t commit and appeared to have more-pressing matters at hand. “To be perfectly frank with you, I wanted to go [play] ice hockey, because right now I’m at the gym. But before starting my workout, let me assure you, I will first call my advisers.”

“Je vous remercie, Monsieur le President,” Putin concluded, thanking him in French.

Macron is heard laughing in delight as he hangs up. The French president and his advisers thought they had a breakthrough. Macron’s diplomatic adviser, Emmanuel Bonne, even danced.

But the following day, in a televised address, Putin officially recognized two separatist Ukrainian provinces in Donbas, including territory controlled by Kyiv, as independent states. It was a stark sign that Putin — his French-language pleasantries aside — intended to dismember Ukraine.

XIII

As Britain and France made last-ditch efforts at diplomacy, world leaders gathered in Munich for an annual security conference. Zelensky attended, prompting concerns among some U.S. officials that his absence might give Russia the perfect moment to strike. Others wondered if the Ukrainian leader believed Russia would attack and had used the opportunity to leave the country before the bombs started falling.

In a speech, Zelensky reminded the audience that his country was already at war with Russia, with Ukrainian troops fighting against the eastern separatists since 2014.

“To really help Ukraine, it is not necessary to constantly talk only about the dates of a probable invasion,” Zelensky said. Instead, the European Union and NATO should welcome Ukraine into their organizations.

Some European officials were still unconvinced that an attack was coming. One told a reporter, “We have no clear evidence ourselves that Putin has made up his mind, and we have not seen anything that would suggest otherwise.”

“It felt otherworldly,” the British official said. In sideline conversations, U.S. and British officials were convinced of an imminent invasion, but “that just wasn’t the mood in the hall.”

Some in London began to doubt themselves, the British official said. “People were saying [we] got it wrong on Afghanistan. We returned and scrubbed the [Ukraine] intelligence again.”

They came up with the same conclusion — Russia would invade. But despite the U.S. diplomatic and intelligence-sharing campaign, it remained a difficult sell.

“If you discover the plans of somebody to attack a country and the plans appear to be completely bonkers, the chances are that you are going to react rationally and consider that it’s so bonkers, it’s not going to happen,” said Heisbourg, the French security expert.

“The Europeans overrated their understanding of Putin,” he said. “The Americans, I assume ... rather than try to put themselves in Putin’s head, decided they were going to act on the basis of the data and not worry about whether it makes any sense or not.”

There had been many reasons to be mystified. U.S. intelligence showed that the Kremlin’s war plans were not making their way down to the battlefield commanders who would have to carry them out. Officers didn’t know their orders. Troops were showing up at the border not understanding they were heading into war. Some U.S. government analysts were bewildered by the lack of communication within the Russian military. Things were so screwy, the analysts thought, Russia’s plans might actually fail. But that remained a distinctly minority view.

For Kuleba, the turning point came in the days after the Feb. 18-20 Munich conference, when he traveled again to Washington. “These were the days I received more-specific information,” he recalled. At a specific airport A in Russia, they told him, five transport planes were already on full alert, ready to take paratroops at any given moment and fly them in the direction of a specific airport B in Ukraine.

“That was where you see the sequence of events and the logic of what is happening,” he said.

Western intelligence officials, looking back at what turned out to be the shambolic Russian attack on Kyiv, acknowledge that they overestimated the effectiveness of the Russian military.

“We assumed they would invade a country the way we would have invaded a country,” one British official said.

XIV

Early in the evening of Feb. 23, the White House received an urgent intelligence flash. There was “high probability” that the invasion had begun. Troops were on the move, and the Russians had fired missiles on targets in Ukraine. The president’s top advisers assembled; some met in the Situation Room while others joined on a secure line.

Sullivan spoke with Yermak, Zelensky’s chief of staff. There was “an extremely high level of agitation” in Kyiv, said a person familiar with the call. “They were not spinning out of control. Just extremely emotional, but in a way you’d expect.”

Yermak told Sullivan to hold on — he wanted to bring Zelensky to the phone to speak directly with Biden. Sullivan connected the call to the Treaty Room, part of the second-floor White House residence used as a study, and got the president on the line.

Zelensky implored Biden to immediately contact as many other world leaders and diplomats as possible. He should tell them to speak out publicly and to call Putin directly and tell him to “turn this off.”

“Zelensky was alarmed,” the person recalled. He asked Biden to “ ‘get us all the intelligence you possibly can now. We will fight, we will defend, we can hold, but we need your help.’ ”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/15 More dangerous heat waves across the US
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/interactive/2022/extreme-heat-risk-map-us/?itid=hp-more-top-stories
GIST	It was the middle of July and already this summer had become a top contender for the hottest in Texas’s recorded history. In San Antonio, which by July would normally experience about three days of triple-digit heat, there had been three dozen . Houston, Waco and Austin were also seeing temperatures 5 to 8 degrees above normal. The state was roasting and Texans were using a record amount of electricity to stay cool.

New calculations suggest that, by the middle of this century, this record-breaking summer in Texas may look normal.

Across much of the United States, millions of people are expected to experience extreme temperatures more frequently and for longer periods of time — a threat that will grow as climate change worsens.

The [new data](#), released Monday by the nonprofit First Street Foundation, calculates the heat risk facing each property in the contiguous United States over the next 30 years, the length of a typical mortgage, providing some of the most detailed nationwide estimates. It uses heat index, a measure of how hot it feels outside by including temperature and humidity.

A Washington Post analysis of the group's data found that today's climate conditions have caused an estimated 46 percent of Americans to endure at least three consecutive days of 100-plus degree heat, on average, each year. Over the next 30 years, that will increase to 63 percent of the population.

Nowhere is the danger more widespread than in the South, where global warming is expected to deliver an average of 20 extra days of triple-digit heat per year. In some southern states, such as Texas and Florida, residents could see over 70 consecutive days with the heat index topping 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

"We're talking about taking summer, which is already hot, and expanding it for months," said Jaime González, director of the Houston Healthy Cities program for the Nature Conservancy in Texas. "That's going to cause all sorts of disruptions to everyday life."

This data comes as more Americans are moving to some of the hottest parts of the United States. For more than a decade, [census data](#) has shown Sun Belt states like Arizona, Texas and Florida drawing in new residents, while Northeastern and Midwestern states are not.

The larger pattern identified by First Street's model suggests that people living in the South are likely to face some of the most dramatic changes over the next several decades. A [previous analysis](#) found that the southern half of the country also faces the greatest risk of wildfire.

First Street's analysis of property level heat exposure is based on a combination of high-resolution measurements of surface temperature data, tree cover, impervious surfaces — like pavement and asphalt — and proximity to water. It incorporates global climate models from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and it relies on a moderate scenario in which global greenhouse gas emissions peak around 2040 and then slowly decline. If countries act more quickly, or fail to enact climate-friendly policies, the outcome could change.

The analysis found that Miami-Dade County in Florida will likely suffer the most extreme change. Whereas the county sees about 50 days of a heat index above 100 degrees, it is likely to have 91 broiling days by 2053.

"We know we have a heat problem here. This is right in line with what we expect," said Jane Gilbert, Miami-Dade's [chief heat officer](#).

Unlike the West and the Midwest, which have been scorched this year by extreme heat waves, South Florida has chronic exposure to high heat for months, Gilbert said. This drives up energy costs and endangers outdoor workers, homeless people and those who can't afford to air-condition their homes all day. The county has designated May 1 through Oct. 31 as an official heat season and launched an awareness campaign targeting neighborhoods with the highest rates of heat-related hospitalization.

Gilbert said having property-level heat projections could help county officials make the case for more tree-planting and painted rooftops that reduce the need for air conditioning.

"If it's truly good modeling, it's extremely valuable to help us develop policies to require cooling," she said.

Florida tops the states that will see the largest increase in days with a heat index over 100 degrees. But residents all along the Gulf Coast and Southeastern Atlantic are also expected to live through more weeks of dangerous heat because of muggy summertime conditions, low elevation and the Gulf of Mexico's warm waters.

Even more severe temperatures are expected to hit a swath of the country stretching from northern Texas and Louisiana to Illinois and Indiana. Though the central United States is not typically thought of as bearing the brunt of summertime heat, First Street's analysis found that tens of millions more people living in this region are likely to see a heat index above 125 degrees by mid-century. The group calls this area an "extreme heat belt."

Situated between the Appalachian and Rocky Mountains, this part of the country "almost forms a bowl that funnels humidity into the area, which drives up those 'feels like' temperatures," said Jeremy Porter, chief research officer for First Street.

Extreme heat belt

By mid-century, the number of counties experiencing at least one day with a heat index of 125° will increase from 50 to more than 1,000.

According to the National Weather Service, at a heat index of 125 degrees — which the agency classifies as an "extreme danger" day — heat stroke becomes "highly likely." And although there is no set temperature threshold at which [roads](#), bridges and trains [start to fail](#), or [water pipes break](#), [recent examples](#) show that it doesn't take a 125 degree day to overtax essential infrastructure.

Unequal risk

Heat is the [top weather-related killer](#) in the United States. But like other effects of climate change, it is felt unevenly. The poor, the elderly, very young children and people with certain chronic medical conditions are most at risk.

Treeless city neighborhoods packed with buildings, parking lots and asphalt roads, absorb and retain more heat than areas with tree-lined streets and parks. Scientists call this the urban heat island effect. Nationwide, [this pattern](#) reveals itself in city after city, concentrating heat in majority low-income Black and Latino neighborhoods that were designated as [risky investments](#) decades ago.

Today, about 64 percent of all Black people in the U.S. experience a dangerous heat wave, defined as more than three consecutive days of a heat index above 100 degrees. But that will increase to 79 percent in 30 years, making a population that is already more vulnerable to heat significantly more exposed.

The Post also found that by the middle of this century, 71 percent of the poorest neighborhoods in the country will likely endure severe heat.

Extreme heat will also make work more dangerous. Today, there are roughly 3.8 million people who work outdoors and experience at least one severe heat wave. In 30 years, that number will increase nearly 30 percent to 4.9 million.

In the Houston neighborhood of Gulfton, the shift to more days of dangerous temperatures and humidity would expose the area's 45,000 residents — many of them recent immigrants from Afghanistan, Syria, and Central America — to unbearable levels of heat. The neighborhood has one park and few trees. Two years ago, when Houston officials worked with scientists and volunteers to map its heat island effect, [they discovered](#) parts of Gulfton were 17 degrees hotter in the afternoon than the coolest neighborhood they measured.

González said that until recently, conversations about climate change in Houston were dominated by talk of flooding and sea level rise. The destruction unleashed by Hurricane Harvey in 2017 forced the city to

	<p>confront the likelihood of intensifying storms. Now, this summer's record-setting heat is forcing another shift in focus, he said.</p> <p>"We're getting a little bit of a preview of what it might look like if we don't take more action," González said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Day 174 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/16/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-174-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ukrainian and Russian officials reported shelling near the Russian-held Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, Europe's largest, on Monday with both sides blaming each other. One Russian-installed regional official said 25 heavy artillery strikes from US-made M777 howitzers had hit near the plant and residential areas. Ukraine said it was Russian forces that had shelled the city to try to make it appear that Ukraine was attacking it. • Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, called for action at the plant, urging the world not to "lose to terrorism" or "give in to nuclear blackmail ... If now the world does not show strength and decisiveness to defend one nuclear power station, it will mean that the world has lost," he said in his nightly address. "If Russia's actions cause a catastrophe, the consequences may also hit those who remain silent so far." • Russia's defence minister and the UN chief discussed the security situation at the plant by phone on Monday, the Russian defence ministry announced. Russia earlier said it would facilitate an IAEA mission to the plant amid warnings from the UN's nuclear agency of a nuclear disaster unless fighting stops. • However, a senior Russian diplomat said that any such IAEA mission could not pass through the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, and through the frontline as it was too dangerous, according to Russian news agencies. The UN says it has the logistics and security capacity to support a visit by experts. • Five Europeans face trial on mercenary charges in separatist-controlled Donetsk, Ukraine. Mathias Gustafsson of Sweden, Vjekoslav Prebeg of Croatia, and Britons John Harding, Andrew Hill and Dylan Healy all pleaded not guilty to charges of being mercenaries and "undergoing training to seize power by force", according to Russian media reports. They could face the death penalty under the laws of the self-proclaimed, unrecognised Donetsk People's Republic. • Three civilians were killed and two wounded by an explosive device while swimming in the Black Sea in the Ukrainian southern region of Odesa, local police said. People working on a construction site reportedly ignored barriers and warning signs on a beach in the Belhorod-Dnistrovskiy district and went swimming in the sea. Three men aged 25, 32 and 53 were killed and another man and a woman were wounded, police said. • The British military is training 10,000 Ukrainian soldiers in marksmanship, battlefield first aid and urban warfare. British trainers aim is to turn raw recruits into battle-ready soldiers in a matter of weeks. The first batch arrived last month and have already been sent back to replenish depleted Ukrainian units. Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Nordic nations have also sent trainers. • The Moscow-appointed administration in Ukraine's Kherson region plans to hold a referendum on 11 September, according to Kremlin sources. Referendums are also planned in three other Ukrainian regions – Donetsk, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia – where Moscow aims to annex the territories and declare them to be a new region of Russia. • Ukraine's parliament has extended martial law for a further three months.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/15 Occupation administration Kherson region
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/15/ukraine-kherson-region-referendum-russia
GIST	"A city with a Russian history," proclaim billboards across the Ukrainian city of Kherson, occupied by the Russian army since the first days of March. Others display the Russian flag, or quotes from Vladimir Putin.

Over the past five months, Moscow has appointed an occupation administration to run the Kherson region and ordered schools to teach the Russian curriculum. Local people are encouraged to apply for Russian passports to access pensions and other benefits.

The next stage of the Kremlin's plan is a referendum, to add a dubious sense of legality to these facts on the ground, and create a pretext for bringing Kherson and other occupied parts of southern [Ukraine](#) into Russia, using an updated version of the 2014 Crimea playbook.

In a series of telephone interviews, people in Kherson reported minimal enthusiasm for a referendum, and described a nervous, unpredictable atmosphere in the city.

Residents remain unsure about what the next few months might bring: a swift Ukrainian counteroffensive to regain control, a protracted battle that turns the city to rubble, or Russia carrying out its sham referendum and annexing the territory.

"You have to remember there was never any talk in Kherson of a referendum; no one thought about it before the war. Now it will be a referendum at gunpoint," said Kostyantyn, who worked in the IT sector before the occupation.

Even those who described themselves as largely apolitical said they were firmly opposed to voting in a referendum or joining Russia.

"I will not go to the referendum, of course. I don't know anyone who will. I am not a political person and don't have strong opinions on politics but it is clear to me that a referendum is not right," said Svitlana, a former beauty salon employee who is now selling food items on the street to make ends meet.

Russian authorities have used intimidation to crush public opposition to their rule. A series of pro-Ukraine rallies that took place in March and April petered out after Russian soldiers shot stun grenades into the crowd and began detaining organisers at their homes.

In late May, the city's internet was rerouted through Russian servers, and all local media has either been shut down or stuffed with pro-Russia content.

Now complaints about the Russians are reserved for whispered conversations in kitchens. Residents describe the formerly bustling city of 300,000 as a "ghost town". The official curfew begins at 10pm, but few people go out after five.

The noisy protest rallies have been replaced by an underground partisan movement. Posters and flyers surreptitiously placed around the city under cover of darkness threaten death to those who collaborate with the occupiers. In June, an official from the puppet authorities was killed in a bomb blast while on his way to work.

Others help Ukraine by sharing information. One person with whom the Guardian spoke said he had responded to a Facebook post back in March, seeking people living in occupied areas, and now regularly shares information with a contact from the Ukrainian security services.

"I am not involved in any way in any underground organisations. I just pass on the information I see ... which factories are working with the occupiers, troop movements, Russian banks I see opening," he said.

The Kremlin reportedly plans to hold the referendum on 11 September. In June, the Russian-language news outlet Meduza cited three sources close to the Kremlin detailing a plan to hold referendums in four Ukrainian regions – Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson – and subsequently turn them into one new region of Russia.

There is a possibility that Russia will stall, hoping for military victories that bring the four regions under full control. Ukraine still holds major cities in the Donetsk region, such as Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, as well as Zaporizhzhia city.

According to some reports, however, ballots are already being printed. In late July, the Russian administration in Kherson invited people to put forward their candidacy as electoral officials.

In Zaporizhzhia, the chair of the regional parliament, Olena Zhuk, said she saw “many signs” that the Russians were preparing for a referendum soon in the occupied parts of the region. “Let’s start by saying any referendum would be illegitimate by Ukrainian law, by Russian law, by any law,” she said in a telephone interview.

Formally annexing more Ukrainian territory may not have been in the Kremlin’s war plans from the beginning. Putin’s goal appears to have been a lightning march to Kyiv and the installation there of a pro-Russia puppet government, which would have kept Ukraine as a nominally independent state in Russia’s orbit.

That plan failed, and the focus moved to annexing larger chunks of southern and eastern Ukraine. In the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, the Russians appointed Volodymyr Saldo and Yevhen Balytskiy, former Ukrainian MPs, as the nominal heads of their administrations.

Saldo fell ill a month ago, and was reportedly airlifted to Moscow in a coma, amid rumours of poisoning.

In Zaporizhzhia, Zhuk said she knew Balytskiy personally and was “shocked” that he had decided to collaborate. She predicted, however, that the Russians would soon have little use for him. “Nobody likes betrayers. It is a rule of life,” she said.

“These people are sent to the square in the first few days to say: ‘Russia will help us. We are all brothers’. But then in one or two months, when the people have been pacified a bit, other people will come and take real power.”

Lower down the chain, the Russians have struggled to find Ukrainian officials to fill the ranks of their occupation administrations, particularly while the future is so uncertain.

“No one wants to work for the Russians. They know it is a one-way ticket to hell,” said Kostyantyn, the former IT worker. Russian television sometimes blurs the faces of officials to ensure they do not become targets for attacks.

One of the most visible figures of Russian rule in Kherson is Kyrylo Stremousov, a former anti-vaccine blogger who stood for mayoral elections in 2020 and received about 1.5% of the vote.

While there have been disappearances and reports of torture, the situation in the occupied Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions is different to the full-scale terror that Russian forces unleashed in Bucha and other occupied areas closer to Kyiv back in March. Here, the Russians have tried to launch something of a “hearts and minds” operation in parallel to the intimidation.

In one recent meeting in a park in the village of Mykilske, Stremousov told a crowd, most of whom were pensioners, that Russia was here to solve their problems, promising an improved economic situation and also using Kremlin rhetoric about so-called “traditional values” in opposition to the decadent west.

“We want to return to the world where there is a real understanding of the word ‘family’ and not a perverted form of it, where everyone can feel like part of one whole,” he said.

The Russians want to open schools on 1 September using the Russian curriculum, and have placed adverts seeking teachers from Russia to “retrain” Ukrainian teachers.

The new administration has also renamed the Kherson National Technical University, dropping the word “national”, and has promised free tuition for anyone of any age who wants to study.

“We are doing everything to make sure we can open our doors on 1 September and our first students can start their lives in comfortable surroundings,” said the Russian-appointed rector, Halyna Raiko, in an interview for a pro-Russian television station in which she appeared visibly nervous and uncomfortable.

While nostalgia for the Soviet period and appeals to conservative social values may work on a segment of the older population, many people who remain in Kherson are hoping fervently for Ukraine to regain control over the city.

“When we hear explosions, everyone rejoices – it means Ukraine is coming closer,” said Olena, a 45-year-old mother, but she conceded that this prospect also comes with its own set of fears.

“We are waiting for the Ukrainian army, but of course we hope civilians don’t die during the liberation. We love our city and don’t want it to be turned into Mariupol,” she said.

There is a fear, though, that if the Kremlin succeeds with its referendum plan and formally annexes the territory, a Ukrainian counteroffensive would become harder and more dangerous, and a Russian crackdown would be on the cards.

“Everyone knows that Russia will fake the referendum results,” said one person who runs an anti-Russia Telegram channel from inside Kherson, who asked not to use his name. “They will feel even more empowered and start rounding up everyone who voted against.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Ukraine determined to win back south
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/16/question-of-time-ukrainians-determined-win-back-south
GIST	<p>In a wrecked office inside Mykolaiv’s administration building in southern Ukraine, Dmytro Pletenchuk showed off his collection of Russian weapons. Propped against the wall were fired Russian rockets and cluster bombs. “I’m thinking about opening a bar for veterans when the war is over,” he said. “My friend who was killed in Kharkiv used to run one. We could use them as decorations.”</p> <p>Pletenchuk’s one-time government workplace was a spectacular ruin. In March, a Russian missile slammed into the regional state HQ, gouging a giant hole, killing 37 people and wounding many more. The security guards in reception miraculously survived. Colleagues having breakfast in the canteen were less fortunate. There are bloodstains on the stairs and in an upstairs corridor.</p> <p>“We are fighting against fucking idiots. It’s good for us. But they have nuclear weapons,” Pletenchuk said, showing off his glass-strewn ninth-floor office, with a panoramic view over the city’s river and port. “Russia is like a monkey with a hand grenade,” he added. “It’s a problem for the whole world. We don’t know if they are going to blow everyone up.”</p> <p>Early in Vladimir Putin’s invasion, Russian troops came close to seizing Mykolaiv, known in Soviet times for its huge shipyard. They swept up from Crimea, occupying the city of Kherson, a regional capital, and much of southern Ukraine. In September, the Kremlin plans to hold “referendums” in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia provinces, which will almost certainly result in them being annexed to Russia.</p> <p>Ukraine is determined to stop this happening. President Volodymyr Zelenskiy has ordered a counteroffensive. The goal is to liberate Kherson and surrounding Russian-occupied settlements on the</p>

right bank of the Dnieper River, followed by further territories in the south and east, and ultimately Crimea itself, seized in 2014 by undercover Russian operatives.

Six months on, the war is entering a decisive phase. The next few weeks may determine Ukraine's de facto borders for years to come. In the eastern Donbas, Russian troops continue to advance, pressing on the Ukrainian-controlled cities of Bakhmut and Sloviansk. In the south, by contrast, their grip appears shakier. The frontline runs between Mykolaiv and Kherson, across a steppe landscape of fields and pulverised villages.

Since June Ukraine has deployed [US-supplied Himars multiple rocket launch systems](#) to clinical effect. It has knocked out four crossing points over the Dnieper, including the Antonivsky Bridge connecting Kherson with the left-bank town of Oleshky. Russia's S-300 and S-400 air defences seem powerless. Over the weekend they failed to stop the latest Himars strike. Video shows orange explosions and clouds of black smoke above the bridge.

Guided missiles also hit the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant, rendering its bridge unusable to heavy vehicles. Ammunition dumps and command posts have been blown up. Last week Kyiv [wiped out Saky aerodrome](#) on the west coast of Crimea, in a mysterious operation deep behind enemy lines. Eight war planes were destroyed. Holidaymakers fled in panic, with traffic jams on the Crimea bridge back to Russia.

Ukrainian commanders, however, concede that a big push in Kherson is some way off. "We have more weapons. Not enough to do an offensive now and to beat the enemy. It is enough to defend our territory," said [Roman Kostenko](#), a pro-European deputy who heads the parliamentary defence and security committee. A special forces officer, Kostenko led the operation in March to defend Mykolaiv, where he and his military team are based.

Advanced western weapons have allowed Ukraine to erode Moscow's military superiority, slowly but surely. "They have made a difference. Previously they fired 100 shells at us, now they fire 20. We are approaching parity," Kostenko said. He continued: "To liberate Kherson we don't need to attack Kherson. If we control the bridge, they have no logistics. If they make a pontoon bridge, it can easily be destroyed."

The Russians appear to have come to the same conclusion. Some western intelligence experts believe it is a matter of time before they abandon Kherson and retreat across the river. Their military leadership reportedly fled last week to the safer left bank. Russian motorised and airborne regiments have been reinforcing defensive positions, with additional soldiers brought in, as well as equipment from [Crimea](#).

Ukraine's Himars rockets have a range of about 50 miles (80km). At the end of July a precision-guided missile [blew up a military freight train](#) in the Kherson region town of Brylivka. Russia has relocated some of its forward command and control centres, pulling back to the village of Myrne, Kostenko said. Troops are digging trenches and moving into civilian houses.

So far the Biden administration is refusing to supply Kyiv with Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) rockets, which can be used in Himars systems and have a 185-mile range. Its reasoning is that Ukraine could use them to strike Russia itself, an act the US fears may lead to a third world war. Zelenskiy dismisses this scenario and has pledged not to attack Russian territory. Negotiations continue, as the Pentagon reviews the situation.

Occupied Crimea, though, is not Russia. The peninsula, heavily militarised by Moscow, is a legitimate Ukrainian target, according to Washington and its allies. "If we got ATACMS, we could hit the bridge linking Crimea with the Russian mainland. It would dramatically change our position in the south," Kostenko said. "We understand the fears of the US side. But with ATACMS we could further degrade Russia's logistics."

Kostenko's Golos party colleague Roman Lozynskyi described Himars as a battlefield "game changer". He showed the Guardian a 60-second video clip he filmed last month somewhere in the Mykolaiv region.

A rocket pierces an inky black canopy, streaking above a ghostly tree line. The noise is shattering. More than a dozen guided missiles roar into the heavens, in rapid succession. There is smoke and bright white light.

“Ukrainian soldiers see Himars and feel proud of our capacity to fight,” Lozynskiy said. “It’s important for our spirits. We can use it to destroy dozens of Russian military camps.” Alongside Kostenko, Lozynskiy is one of a handful of lawmakers from the Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine’s parliament, to have joined the army. He has been serving since February on the southern front. In the corridor of his base are next-generation light antitank weapons and Stinger missiles.

Until Ukraine strikes, Russia is able to bombard Mykolaiv every day. The city – home to 240,000 people, from a pre-invasion population of half a million – has been badly damaged. On Saturday three Uragan rockets smashed into the port. Missiles have wrecked schools, the national university, several hotels, and the Golden Pheasant restaurant. At least 121 people have been killed and 534 injured, including six children.

Shelling has wrecked the main water pipe supplying the city. The local council has installed standpipes; residents spend part of their day queueing for drinking water and can be seen on the streets lugging five-litre bottles. “I ignore the explosions. If they bomb me, they can bomb me in my bed,” 72-year-old Valentina Bevz said as she waited her turn at a communal tap. “We have a saying: ‘You can’t escape your destiny.’”

She said her sister had rung on the day of the invasion from Crimea, asking tearfully: “Will you break off contact with me?” Bevz said: “She understands what’s going on and her friends are decent people. Most Russians are zombies and chauvinists. They think Russia is always right.” Irina Moroz, 79, described Russia’s president as “Putler”. “The name is a cross between Putin and Hitler,” she said cheerfully.

The governor of the Mykolaiv region, Vitaliy Kim, would not be drawn on when exactly Ukraine may go on the offensive. “It’s a question of time. I hope it will happen as soon as possible. We have an order to win back our territories and our people,” he said. The west could speed up the recapture of Kherson by giving Ukraine more heavy weapons and by not succumbing to war fatigue, he added.

Kim described the Kremlin’s tactics as “terrorism”. He said Russian soldiers were regularly shelling civilians to “break our will”. “It isn’t working. They are just killing people,” he noted. Asked if the promised counterattack was a bluff, the governor pointed to the gains Ukraine’s armed forces had already made. They had pushed the Russians back, he said, and liberated a string of villages to the east of Mykolaiv, around the Inhul River.

Back at the shattered administration building, Pletenchuk – a captain in the navy and a public affairs officer – said he had no doubt Ukraine would prevail. Ukrainians had always resisted Russian imperialism, he said. They included his grandfather, whom Stalin sent to Siberia. Pletenchuk reasoned: “We have motivation. They don’t want to die in this country. We are defending our homeland. They are fighting for a washing machine.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 China rations electricity to factories
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/16/china-rations-electricity-to-factories-as-heatwave-sees-power-demand-surge
GIST	<p>Chinese lithium hub Sichuan province will ration electricity supply to factories until Saturday, state media reported, as a heatwave sends power demands soaring and dries up reservoirs.</p> <p>Temperatures in the province – home to nearly 84 million people – have hovered above 40-42 degrees Celsius (104-108 degrees fahrenheit) since last week, according to data from China’s Meteorological Administration, increasing the demand for air conditioning.</p>

The region relies on dams to generate 80% of its electricity, but rivers in the area have dried up this summer, Beijing's Water Resources Ministry said.

The province in China's south-west produces half the nation's lithium, used in batteries for electric vehicles, and its hydropower projects provide electricity to industrial hubs along the country's east coast.

But the local government has decided to prioritise residential power supply, ordering industrial users in 19 out of 21 cities in the province to suspend production until Saturday, according to a notice issued Sunday.

Several companies including aluminium producer Henan Zhongfu Industrial and fertiliser producers Sichuan Meifeng Chemical Industry said in stock exchange statements they were suspending production.

A plant operated by Taiwanese giant and Apple supplier Foxconn in the province has also suspended production, Taipei's Central news agency reported.

Some companies will be permitted to operate at a limited capacity, depending on their production needs.

"Sources estimate at least 1,200 tonnes of lithium output will be cut due to the operations disruptions in these five days," Susan Zou, an analyst at Rystad Energy, told AFP, adding the cost of lithium carbonate had jumped since Monday.

A summer of extreme weather in China has seen multiple major cities record their hottest days ever.

China's national observatory reissued a red alert for high temperatures on Monday, state media reported, as the mercury soared past 40 degrees Celsius (104 fahrenheit) across swathes of the country.

Provinces including Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Anhui that rely on power from western China have also issued electricity curbs for industrial users to ensure homes had enough power, according to local media reports.

Scientists say extreme weather across the world has become more frequent due to climate change, and will probably grow more intense as global temperatures rise.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 US approves 94% tech exports to China
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-approves-nearly-all-tech-exports-to-china-data-shows-11660596886?mod=hp_lead_pos1
GIST	<p>The U.S. has identified intensifying technological competition with China as a top national-security threat. But a Commerce Department-led process that reviews U.S. tech exports to the country approves almost all requests and has overseen an increase in sales of some particularly important technologies, according to an analysis of trade data.</p> <p>Of the U.S.'s total \$125 billion in exports to China in 2020, officials required a license for less than half a percent, Commerce Department data shows. Of that fraction, the agency approved 94%, or 2,652, applications for technology exports to China. The figures omit applications "returned without action," meaning their outcomes were uncertain.</p> <p>The result: The U.S. continues to send to China an array of semiconductors, aerospace components, artificial-intelligence technology and other items that could be used to advance Beijing's military interests.</p> <p>The Commerce Department says it is focused on long-term, strategic competition with China and that it makes export-control decisions with its interagency partners in the Defense, State and Energy Departments.</p>

Critics say Commerce officials are improperly giving priority to U.S. commercial interests over national security and that an urgent regulatory revamp is necessary to respond to the threat from Beijing.

For Steve Coonen, the Pentagon's former top China export-controls analyst, the high rate of approvals for licenses to sell tech with potential military use is evidence of significant policy failure.

"I have no problem trading with or feeding China," Mr. Coonen told colleagues in a September 2021 email after resigning over frustrations with the policy. "I have a huge problem with arming China." A Pentagon spokeswoman declined to comment on Mr. Coonen's resignation.

The U.S. export-controls process, long a niche topic, is now at the center of a debate over how much the U.S. should continue to trade with its most powerful adversary, dozens of current and former U.S. officials said in interviews with The Wall Street Journal.

"I do believe China's the greatest threat we face," said Mira Ricardel, a former Trump administration Commerce official in charge of export controls.

"What we don't have is a consensus in the U.S. government on what the relationship should be economically," she said. "There are people who are like 'No, no, no, we can't send China anything,' but that's not the policy," she said, referring to technology exports.

Some warn tighter restrictions on U.S. tech sales to China will backfire because allies such as Germany, Japan and South Korea will step in to fill the void. For export restrictions to be effective, "we need our allies to have the same controls," said Kevin Wolf, a senior Commerce official during the Obama administration, while testifying on Capitol Hill last year. "It is that simple and logical."

Such coordination, however, could take years, and others argue that China's official [military-civil fusion](#) policy—which seeks to erase the distinctions between the military and the private sector—requires an immediate response, because it has made it impossible for the U.S. to guarantee tech transferred to China won't end up in military hands.

Some question the role of the Commerce Department, the U.S.'s lead agency on the issue. Matt Pottinger, former President [Donald Trump](#)'s deputy national-security adviser, said the agency's export-controls unit, called the Bureau of Industry and Security, "has struggled to reconcile its mission to protect U.S. national security with the Commerce Department's objective of promoting U.S. exports. The dilemma is most acute when it comes to China."

In late 2019, Mr. Pottinger gathered BIS officials for a special meeting in the White House Situation Room and accused them of working against administration policy on China in favor of helping U.S. businesses, according to people familiar with the matter. Mr. Pottinger acknowledged the episode, which ultimately failed to change attitudes within the unit, the people said.

Thea D. Rozman Kendler, assistant secretary of Commerce for export administration, denied the assertion. "We are promoting U.S. technological leadership. And in order to do that we need to understand U.S. technological leadership," she said. "The best place to get that information is from industry."

Advocates of stronger U.S. export controls also criticized successive White House administrations and the other members of the interagency process, whom they said often provide ineffective input.

Ms. Kendler said its interagency partners at the Defense, State and Energy Departments are welcome to appeal matters to higher authorities if they are unhappy. Of the more than 41,000 license applications BIS processed in fiscal year 2021, she said only 57 were escalated multiple times.

Spokespeople for the National Security Council, the Pentagon and Energy Department expressed support for the export-controls process, describing it as crucial to protecting national security. The State Department didn't respond to requests for comment.

In 2018 Congress passed the [Export Control Reform Act](#) requiring the Commerce Department to tighten controls on emerging and foundational technologies such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing, but critics said progress has been slow.

Commerce also no longer controls more established technologies such as some semiconductor-equipment manufacturing tools, which are critical to making chips for both military and civilian use. Chinese trade data, compiled by the United Nations, shows imports of such equipment from the U.S. rose to \$6.9 billion in 2021, up from \$2.6 billion in 2017.

Following an industry lobbying campaign, “we don’t need any licenses as we sit here today to sell anything in China,” the chief financial officer of U.S. chip toolmaker [Lam Research](#) told an investor conference in September 2020.

Ms. Kendler, the Commerce official, declined to discuss criticisms of the way it treats specific companies but said the agency has been “aggressively focused on reorienting” its policies on both China and Russia.

Some worry about what they describe as the porous nature of Commerce Department moves to restrict specific Chinese companies. Kharon, a Washington, D.C.-based research and data-analytics firm, said it has identified tens of thousands of Chinese entities that may meet the U.S. criteria for military end-user export restrictions, even though there are only roughly 70 on the Commerce Department’s current list.

And the agency’s list of restricted entities—often called an export blacklist—doesn’t block U.S. companies from selling to its members. It only requires them to apply for licenses, which are often granted.

Rep. Michael McCaul (R., Texas), the ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, who has been pushing for tighter controls, said the Commerce Department from Nov. 9, 2020, through April 20, 2021, issued more than [\\$100 billion worth of export licenses](#) to suppliers of blacklisted Chinese firms Huawei Technologies Co. and Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corp. The Commerce Department [had added SMIC](#) to the list after defense contractor James Mulvenon documented the [chip maker’s military customers](#).

SMIC recently gained the [capability to make 7-nanometer chips](#), its most advanced yet, according to researchers at Canadian firm TechInsights Inc. “This is a groundbreaking discovery because the U.S. Department of Commerce was supposed to be restricting export licenses,” wrote semiconductor analyst Dylan Patel.

SMIC didn’t return requests for comment. Huawei declined to comment.

Another problem, said former senior Commerce official Nazak Nikakhtar, is that once a license is issued, the U.S. has little ability to ensure the technology won’t be diverted because the Chinese government doesn’t allow proper inspections.

In some cases, U.S. companies are able to sell technology to Chinese customers on the entity list without even applying for licenses, according to the regulations.

Chinese artificial-intelligence giant [SenseTime](#) told Hong Kong regulators last year that because a U.S. entity listing only identified one of its units, the measure wouldn’t have “any material adverse impact.” Surveillance research firm IPVM highlighted the issue in a September 2021 post, but BIS hasn’t tightened the restriction. SenseTime didn’t respond to requests for comment.

U.S. companies can also often freely sell technology to entity-listed companies in China by producing the goods in overseas factories, the rules say.

HEADLINE	08/16 Explosions hit Russia ammo depot Crimea
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/explosions-hit-russian-ammunition-depot-in-crimea-11660635257?mod=hp_lead_pos5
GIST	<p>Russian authorities reported explosions at an ammunition depot in Crimea on Tuesday morning, a week after blasts at a Russian air base on the peninsula appeared to destroy several warplanes.</p> <p>The new explosions took place at a temporary ammunition dump at a former farm near the village of Maiske in northern Crimea, a local official told Russia state news agency TASS. Local authorities are evacuating Maiske.</p> <p>Videos shared on social media by Ukrainian media and officials showed a large fire and plumes of smoke with the sound of explosions crackling.</p> <p>Ukraine didn't claim responsibility for the blast in Crimea, which Russia's military seized in 2014. One senior Ukrainian official appeared to refer to it in a celebratory post on social media, using a Ukrainian word that mocks the Russian euphemism for explosions.</p> <p>"I really like this cotton," Andriy Yermak, head of Ukraine's presidential administration, wrote on Telegram. The word for cotton in Russian is the same as the word Russian officials have used to describe explosions, meaning a pop or a clap.</p> <p>Last week, satellite images appeared to show a number of destroyed warplanes after explosions hit a Russian air base in Crimea, contradicting Russia's official account that no planes were lost in the blasts. Officials in Kyiv mocked Russia over the blasts but didn't claim responsibility for them.</p> <p>The damage to Russian facilities in Crimea has provided a morale boost for Ukrainian forces, which surrendered the peninsula in 2014 with little resistance and have been losing ground in the country's east. For Russia, it underscores vulnerabilities on territory that Moscow considers its own in a war that it has sought to portray as a limited operation.</p> <p>The new blast comes as Ukraine is seeking to dislodge Russian forces from areas in the south of the country that they occupied in the early days of the war. Ukraine's strategy has focused on destroying ammunition depots, command posts and bridges to cut off Russian troops on the western bank of the Dnipro river.</p> <p>Kyiv is urging residents of the Russian-occupied Kherson region to leave before a winter exacerbated by shortages sets in and ahead of a promised Ukrainian counteroffensive to retake the strategic area. Evacuation from the territory would make it easier for Ukrainian forces to operate there without inflicting civilian casualties.</p> <p>The calls come as Ukraine continues to tout its major counteroffensive to retake the city of Kherson and other occupied areas, a campaign that has been bolstered by the delivery of powerful Western weapons but has yet to yield any results in terms of significant territory regained.</p> <p>Kyiv has been laying the ground for the operation, striking infrastructure in an effort to cut off Russian forces in the region. Some key infrastructure has been disabled through precision strikes by arms including U.S.-supplied Himars rocket systems, with all three road bridges into the central part of the region now likely inoperable, according to Ukrainian officials. But military analysts say Ukraine lacks the manpower for a full-scale assault.</p> <p>Speaking at the opening of a trade fair for Russia's military-industrial complex outside Moscow on Monday, President Vladimir Putin sought to play down Russia's international isolation by thanking its allies and said the military operation in Ukraine was going according to plan.</p>

	<p>“Our soldiers together with troops from the Donbas are fulfilling their duty with honor, fighting for Russia and peace in the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics,” he said, referring to two Russian proxy states in eastern Ukraine’s Donbas area.</p> <p>Fighting around the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant has intensified in recent days. Mr. Zelensky on Monday accused Russia of rejecting the security demands of the European Union and other countries that have called on Russia to withdraw its forces from the plant.</p> <p>The spokesman for United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said U.N. officials haven’t canceled or blocked a visit by the International Atomic Energy Agency to the plant, rejecting claims from Russian officials.</p> <p>“The U.N. Secretariat has assessed that it has in Ukraine the logistics and security capacity to be able to support any IAEA mission to the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant from Kyiv, should both Russia and Ukraine agree,” Stéphane Dujarric said.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/16 Russia withdrawal brings more shelling
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russian-withdrawal-brings-more-shelling-in-southern-ukrainian-town-11660642201
GIST	<p>ORIKHIV, Ukraine—Standing in city hall, with flies buzzing in and out of the shattered windows and the roof partially covered by a tarp, Mayor Anatoliy Hovorostyanov calls the sound of U.S.-supplied Himars rocket systems “the voice of God.”</p> <p>Ukrainian troops here repelled the Russians from the edge of town after the long-range systems arrived on the southern front two months ago.</p> <p>For residents, however, life grew even tougher.</p> <p>“The shelling has become more chaotic,” Mr. Hovorostyanov says. “And bloodier.”</p> <p>The situation in Orikhiv shows the challenge of trying to hold off—and push back—the invading Russians while also protecting Ukrainian civilians.</p> <p>Russian troops are now about 5 miles outside the city—twice as far as two months ago.</p> <p>With more space between the two sides, the Russians are using heavier weaponry, without risk of hitting their own troops. Instead of tank fire and other light artillery, they are now pummeling the area with rockets, which do far more damage.</p> <p>The same situation can be found across the southern front line, where Ukrainian officials have telegraphed a counteroffensive to retake territory that Russians seized in the first days of the war. Russians are also gearing up for a battle, and have sent in thousands of troops to the region.</p> <p>“The Russians have taken a step back, because they’re afraid of the Himars,” says a special operations commander stationed south of Kryviy Rih. “Mortars and light artillery are out of range now, and they’re using more heavy artillery. It’s the same number of shells, but they’re doing more damage.”</p> <p>Before the war, some 19,500 people lived in Orikhiv and its six surrounding villages, working mostly in agriculture. Several dozen have been killed, and most have fled, leaving a population of around 3,500. Three of the villages have been occupied by the Russians. Mr. Hovorostyanov sent his own family to the regional capital of Zaporizhzhia, about an hour away. Most of the residents who stayed can’t afford to leave, he says.</p> <p>“Citizens of this community are not the richest people in the country,” he says.</p>

Mr. Hovorostyanov starts his day with a drive around the city to assess the fresh damage. [No building has been untouched](#) over the past five months, he says, including his own apartment. His old car is now a burned-out husk outside the city hall, which has been hit twice.

Gas was cut off over a month ago and, because the damage is on the Russian side, can't be fixed. By 8 a.m., Mr. Hovorostyanov is dispatching utility workers to fix electric and water lines, hoping to keep the city habitable for those who remain.

A humanitarian aid center has become the main gathering point. Each morning, after the shelling subsides, locals crowd around an outpost of World Central Kitchen, a U.S.-based nonprofit providing meals, where they collect bags full of macaroni, oats and canned pork.

Lyudmyla Zhabankova, director of social services for the city, says everyone left in town comes to get food. About a month ago, as the shelling grew worse and tensions rose, soldiers with rifles were brought in to keep the crowds under control.

"People started to become more aggressive," Ms. Zhabankova says. Her dacha, outside the city, was completely destroyed, and she has stopped replacing the windows in her house, knowing they will likely blow out again. "Everyone is more nervous now. They're really tired. They have no job. They stand in line every day."

In recent weeks, most of the damage has been in the neighborhood in the south of the town, closest to the front line.

The neighborhood has been without electricity for three months and often has no water. The water tower is pockmarked with holes. Nearby, half a dozen stray dogs lie in the shade of a tree, sniffing at rotting apples on the ground.

Yuriy Romashka, 60 years old, says he is one of just 13 people still living in the locality. Only three people are still living in his apartment building, which is surrounded by ditches from mortars. Next door, a larger apartment building took a direct hit and now stands empty. He says he bathes with water from a nearby river.

"It's worse now," he says. "More damage. More shells. And much louder."

Down the street, a kindergarten lay flattened—one of several schools in the city destroyed by Russian shells. Mr. Romashka says soldiers were staying in the building before it was hit.

Earlier this month, a report from Amnesty International [criticized the Ukrainian military](#) for setting up bases in populated areas, including schools, thereby giving the Russians an excuse to target civilian areas.

Ukrainian officials excoriated the report, saying it absolved Russia of responsibility for civilian casualties.

One of the other remaining residents of Mr. Romashka's building, Nikolai Laboda, says that when the Ukrainian soldiers were at the kindergarten, they repeatedly pressed him to leave before the school was hit in June.

"I kept refusing," he says, as his pot of chicken soup bubbled on a charcoal stove outside. "What should I do if I moved to town? I don't have anyone there." He says another woman in the building died of a heart problem while soldiers were staying at the school.

On Monday, Ukraine's government again [urged civilians to leave the neighboring Kherson region](#) ahead of winter.

	<p>Ioan Ivahnenko, who also remained in the district, says he often calls the mayor, asking the city to restore the electricity, but is told it is too dangerous to send work crews to the area.</p> <p>In late April, he was trying to repair a window on his house when a piece of shrapnel hit him and broke his leg, putting him in hospital for several months</p> <p>Mr. Ivahnenko, who now walks with a cane, says it is possible to survive here for now. But with no windows and no gas to heat the house, he doesn't know how long he—or other residents of Orikhiv—can last.</p> <p>"It's summer now," he says. "How will we survive the winter?"</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/15 Wildfires threaten nearby Leavenworth
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3597353/wildfires-threaten-nearby-leavenworth-12-fires-burn-across-wa-state/
GIST	<p>A series of fires in Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, about 20 miles from Leavenworth, broke out over the past week as fire crews work on containment and the protection of the historic, mock Bavarian tourist village.</p> <p>Two fires, the White River Fire and the Irving Peak Fire, broke out in Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest after lightning ignited dry brush in the area. Smoke in the area is highly visible near Lake Wenatchee and residents and tourists have been warned to stay clear of Little Wenatchee and White River Roads.</p> <p>Currently, the White River Fire is burning 516 acres, and the Irving Peak Fire 160 acres. Both are 0% contained. The White River Fire, in particular, has grown very rapidly, after being only 343 acres on Sunday, Aug. 15.</p> <p>Chelan County has issued a Level 3 evacuation (Go Now) for Sears Creek Road, while White River Road is at Level 2 (Be Prepared), and Little Wenatchee Road is at Level 1 (Stay Alert).</p> <p>So far, five houses have been evacuated in the Sears Creek area, and officials are considering closing more roads nearby.</p> <p>Currently, three hotshot crews, two fire engines, and a bulldozer are responding, with more resources on order.</p> <p>KIRO Newsradio News Director Charlie Harger is in Leavenworth reporting on the situation; he described the situation as people begin to prepare for evacuation from the fire, if necessary.</p> <p>"I'm here in Leavenworth, and I've heard it multiple times, a similar sound to an Amber Alert. Residents are being advised they may have to evacuate at some point," Harger said. "There are a handful of mandatory evacuations. Elsewhere, people are told to get ready for what might happen."</p> <p>In Whitman County, the Miller Road Fire, which started Aug. 12, at approximately 1:00 p.m., has been increasing in size.</p> <p>Washington State Patrol Chief John Batiste has authorized the mobilization of state firefighters.</p> <p>The fire is an estimated 200 acres and threatens several residences, crops, and infrastructure in the area.</p> <p>The cause of the fire is still under investigation.</p> <p>The much smaller Phelps Ridge Fire and Buck Creek Fire, both located in the Glacier Peak Wilderness, are unstaffed but being monitored as they are only 1-2 acres and a fifth of an acre, respectively.</p>

	<p>There are six fires in the Cle Elum Ranger District and all are located within 2 miles of Thorp Mountain, approximately 11-13 miles northwest of Cle Elum, WA.</p> <p>A closure is pending for the Thorp Mountain area, and officials are asking the public to stay clear of that area as helicopters and other fire suppression resources are working there. All the fires are less than an acre in size, with the exception of the Thorp Mountain Fire, which is 4 acres.</p> <p>Helicopters continue to drop water on this fire to aid in fire suppression. The quarter-acre Malcolm Fire, located 13 miles north of Cle Elum, was contained and controlled this morning.</p> <p>As another heat wave kicks off mid-week, officials say the public should remain vigilant and follow burn bans in their areas, as the dry grass and brush increase the risk of sparking more serious fires.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Forgotten virus: Zika children, families
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/16/health/zika-children-research.html
GIST	<p>RECIFE, Brazil — A procession of mothers pushed children in bulky wheelchairs down a long corridor at a health center in this northeastern Brazilian city, passing patients who glanced at the children, looked away, then looked back, quickly and uneasily.</p> <p>The children were smartly turned out in Disney T-shirts, striped socks, plastic sandals. Girls had ponytails tied with big bows; many wore brightly colored glasses. And all were profoundly disabled, their limbs rigid, their mouths slack, many with foreheads that sloped sharply back above their dark eyes.</p> <p>Most Brazilians know as soon as they see them: These are Zika babies, whose mothers were infected with the virus while pregnant during a virulent outbreak of the mosquito-borne illness in 2015 and 2016. The chief signifier at birth was microcephaly, unusually small heads that hinted at the devastating brain damage the virus caused while they were still in utero.</p> <p>Seven years later, they are now children, many of them nearly as big as their mothers. The sight of them visibly startles people who have not thought about them for years. After the Zika epidemic did not turn into a pandemic that swept the globe, Brazil and the rest of the world moved on.</p> <p>That has left families in this scrappy corner of Brazil, where the epidemic originated, struggling, mostly alone, to get help for their children, whose mysterious condition presents new challenges constantly. Many rely on charity, such as free physical therapy at the private foundation where they come each week in the procession of wheelchairs. Many of the women pushing the chairs wear T-shirts that say “Fight like a Mother” in Portuguese.</p> <p>It has also left scientists unable to answer basic questions about the virus and the danger it could pose.</p> <p>The virus is still circulating at a low level in Brazil and elsewhere in Latin America, as well as in South and Southeast Asia. But attention and funding dried up after the global concerns faded, said Dr. Diana Rojas Alvarez, who leads the Zika work by the World Health Organization.</p> <p>“This is what happens when you have a public health emergency that affects tropical countries and that doesn’t have the global impact Covid had,” she said. “Initially, there was a lot of interest in developing good treatments and diagnostic tests — I remember being in a meeting where there were 40 vaccine candidates in development. But since 2017, everything went quiet.”</p> <p>When Zika failed to cause much damage in the United States, both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases, scaled back their funding for work related to the disease. In Brazil, President Jair Bolsonaro, who took office in early 2019, made deep cuts to scientific research.</p>

The few virologists and infectious disease specialists who continued to work on Zika after the epidemic subsided were forced to set it aside when the coronavirus pandemic hit, Dr. Rojas Alvarez said.

This phenomenon is not uncommon when a public health threat recedes. “All the mysteries of 2016, we still have them,” said Dr. Maria Elisabeth Lopes Moreira, a neonatologist who leads a project following children born with congenital Zika syndrome at a research institute for maternal and child health in Rio de Janeiro.

Seven years after the first mysterious cases of microcephaly were identified in Brazil, scientists are not much closer to understanding how a virus that was first identified 75 years ago in a forest in Uganda and never known to be harmful, turned up in the northeast of Brazil in 2015.

There, it took advantage of a heavy rain season and a booming crop of a mosquito species that made a fine new host to roar through the population, infecting about three-quarters of the residents of Recife and other cities. Scientists have established that a mutation in Zika allowed it to cross the barrier of the placenta in the womb — a first for a mosquito-borne virus — but they don’t know why the babies of some pregnant women who caught Zika escaped unscathed.

Between 7 percent and 14 percent of babies born to mothers who caught Zika while pregnant have congenital Zika syndrome, the spectrum of symptoms observed in infants exposed to the Zika virus in utero. In about 3 percent, the effects include microcephaly.

“What’s the difference between them? I don’t know,” Dr. Moreira said. One factor appears to be when in the course of her pregnancy a mother was infected: the earlier she caught the virus, the more severe impact on the baby. “But we don’t have the budget any more to do research.”

The researchers suspect they have yet to identify all of the affected children. Some babies born to mothers with Zika infections had normal head sizes and did not cause concern until they started to miss basic developmental milestones, and scans revealed they did not have key structures in their brains or had severe calcification of brain tissue.

Now, as the children born at the peak of the Zika outbreak begin to attend school, neurodevelopmental screening may identify more of them, said Dr. Ricardo Ximenes, an epidemiologist and professor of tropical medicine at the Federal University of Pernambuco, who co-directs a large longitudinal study following 700 children with congenital Zika syndrome in Recife. “There may be mild damage of the nervous system that may affect their learning ability, or not; we don’t know.”

For the children who have struggled since birth, there is a “spectrum of symptoms,” Dr. Ximenes said. Many have significant hearing and visual problems. The majority have needed feeding tubes implanted because they cannot swallow. They are hypertonic, with arms and legs held stiffened by overly contracted muscles. Many are now having hip surgeries because their joints malformed as they grew. They have a range of cognitive defects.

“Mostly, they froze in motor and intellectual development at six months,” said Dr. Demócrito de Barros Miranda-Filho, an epidemiologist and associate professor of infectious disease at the State University of Pernambuco, who is following the children with Dr. Ximenes.

Some of the Zika children have died. Dr. Moreira said about one-fifth of the children in the group she has followed since birth have died, many from respiratory infections they contracted after choking on food.

As research funds have dwindled, Dr. Moreira said, so has the once-robust support for the Zika families.

“We are basically forgotten,” said Verônica Santos, who spends her days and nights never more than a few feet away from her son João Guilherme, 7.

João Guilherme now weighs almost as much as his mother does, but he needs her to lift and move him, to attach and clean his feeding tube several times a day, to change his diapers, to suction his throat and to leap up from the floor where she sleeps by his bed and jostle him if an alarm tells her he has stopped breathing in the night.

João Guilherme twitches and groans in recognition when his father lifts him in the air, when his mother smothers him with kisses and when his sisters walk by and drop a smooch on his head. But that is the extent of his communication.

“Sometimes I wonder: What will happen to him when I’m gone?” Ms. Santos said.

Because Ms. Santos is a fierce advocate for her son, he gets physiotherapy and audio and visual stimulation every day. In Recife, about 80 of the Zika children receive free physical therapy and audiological and ophthalmological care at the Altino Ventura Foundation, a private charity. A few hundred more receive therapies and support through a large public hospital.

Many others, however, are being raised by families in the rural interior of the country and have no access to services.

The research group has also identified a cohort of children who were born with microcephaly but do not have brain damage. They have caught up developmentally as they have grown and now are “basically fine,” said Dr. Miranda-Filho.

“This was surprising,” he said.

Researchers say there are also new cases of congenital Zika syndrome occurring, since the virus continues to circulate in Brazil and beyond, said Dr. Albert Ko, an epidemiologist and professor of public health at Yale University. He plunged into research on Zika back in 2015 in low-income neighborhoods in the northeastern Brazilian city of Salvador, where he had been studying infectious disease for years.

Now, he said, transmission of the virus is not being detected there or in other communities that bore the brunt of the epidemic seven years ago because so many people were infected that immunity will likely last for many years. But there are other areas of Brazil and Latin America where the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, the primary transmitter of the Zika virus, lives and where most of the population has never been exposed to Zika.

“My suspicion is there is transmission, but it’s not hitting the books, it’s not being detected,” he said. It was only the phenomenally high rate of infection seven years ago that caused enough babies to be born with microcephaly at the same time that it triggered alarm in pediatric neurologists and a rush to unravel the mystery.

Brazil registered 19,719 [probable cases of Zika](#) in 2022 by the end of July, likely a fraction of those that have occurred. Some 70 percent of Zika infections are asymptomatic, and if people seek medical help for symptoms, they may be diagnosed with or tested for dengue virus, which can look similar and is much more common. The only existing test for Zika is cross-reactive with dengue antibodies, so a person can easily be misdiagnosed.

“It’s still as urgent as it was back in 2015: We still need better ways to diagnose Zika infection,” Dr. Ko said.

A PCR test for Zika is only effective for about five days at the height of person’s infection. Very few of the women who were infected took that test, which left researchers retrospectively trying to establish that they had Zika during their pregnancies. Dr. Moreira said her priority is development of a test that could be administered at the birth of a child to every woman living in an area that has *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes to show if she was recently infected so the newborn could be followed closely.

A strikingly large number of the women who had babies with congenital Zika syndrome, at the height of the epidemic, were Black or mixed race, at least in part because both fall disproportionately into the lowest income groups.

A number of studies have found that Zika infection was worse in low-income areas of cities than in high-income ones. One survey by Dr. Ernesto Marques, an associate professor of infectious diseases and microbiology at the University of Pittsburgh, found that about one-third of high-income women in Recife showed evidence of Zika infection in 2015, while almost two-thirds of low income women did. Low-income women are less likely to have air conditioning, more likely to live at the ground level, more likely to live in areas with poor sanitation, which provide more breeding territory for mosquitoes — and thus are more likely to have been bitten.

“How cruel that you have these gradients in risk that are just created by living in poor communities,” said Dr. Ko.

But Dr. Marques, who is from Recife and who dived into study of the pandemic when it began in 2015, wondered if there were other factors at work. “You see 97 percent of the cases are in lower socioeconomic classes, and only 3 percent in medium and high. Why is that?” he said. “It could be a variety of things: It could be immunological background, it could be other infections you’ve already had making you susceptible, it could be stress during the pregnancy. All these are the things that are associated with poverty in some way that facilitate the virus to cross the placenta.”

He hopes for funding specifically to research genetic factors that may increase susceptibility; while African ancestry has been shown to be protective against dengue, the related virus, he wonders if Indigenous ancestry, which mixed-raced Brazilians often have, will prove to increase vulnerability to Zika.

For now, Dr. Marques and his colleagues can do only the most minimal work on the virus. “Everyone was basically obliged to work on Covid since 2020,” he said. “My lab closed completely, and I could only do work if it was related to Covid.”

At the height of the Zika crisis, the United States government led investment in the search for a vaccine. Dr. Marques called it a model for the Operation Warp Speed effort to find a Covid-19 vaccine.

But this was “turtle speed, not warp speed,” he said, and the vaccine candidates never got past Phase 1 before most interest passed.

It is difficult to test a vaccine without an active outbreak of the virus, but Dr. Marques said there should be a stockpile of candidate vaccines manufactured and ready to deploy if and when there is another surge of cases. There is no antiviral Zika treatment, another research project largely abandoned when the disease waned.

After the outbreak in Brazil, Zika turned up in South and then Southeast Asia, and then once again in Africa, where babies with microcephaly were born in Angola in 2016, although on a much smaller scale than in Brazil. The range of the main vector mosquito is expanding steadily because of climate change and urbanization — two billion people live around the insects now, almost all of them in areas without reliable access to testing or standard maternal screening for fetal development.

But if the virus arrives in a new place when it is not peak mosquito season, then it may not trigger a detectable outbreak. “Are Indians and Thais less susceptible, or are we just not detecting it?” Dr. Ko asked. “Is congenital Zika syndrome being misdiagnosed as something like toxoplasmosis?”

It’s puzzling that the global trajectory of the disease has looked so different from that in Brazil, he said, and it is urgent to answer the question of why. “It is going to come back and hit us, whether it’s in the Americas or other places in the world,” he said. “We haven’t done what’s really needed and set up good surveillance in these low-income countries.”

	<p>The research institute where Dr. Ximenes and his colleagues work is cramped and decrepit. The rainy season sent muddy water cresting over the pathways between buildings, and the researchers spoke with a visiting reporter in a meeting-room-turned-supply-closet because their office was flooded. They seem weighed down by the quantity of questions they lack the resources to investigate.</p> <p>“Is Zika gone, will it come back? We don’t know,” said Dr. Ximenes. “We have to learn as much as we can about what happened to mount a better response to another wave, if it comes.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Ukraine war cleanup raves
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/16/world/europe/ukraine-war-cleanup-rave.html
GIST	<p>YAHIDNE, Ukraine — They put on their pink, orange and green sunglasses again. Out of the closets came high platform shoes, short black skirts, leather leggings and metal jewelry.</p> <p>They were hip, young and beautiful, and ready to party on a recent balmy summer evening in a dramatic setting — a bombed-out ruin of a building damaged by war and littered with debris.</p> <p>They were brought together by the group Repair Together, which hopes to revive Ukraine’s once famous, preinvasion rave scene, but with a wartime twist: doing good while having fun.</p> <p>Andriy Diachenko, whose stage name is D.J. Recid, spun the tunes. And the crowd of 20-somethings — dressed in their nightclub finery — pushed wheelbarrows, shoveled rubble and swept dust, all while nodding and swaying to the beat.</p> <p>“Right now, it feels inappropriate to go clubbing,” said Tetyana Burianova, 26, one of the rave’s organizers, and an avid partyer in Kyiv’s nightlife scene before the war. “I do want to go back to my former life but only after the war. While there is war, my life, like everyone’s, is only about volunteering.”</p> <p>The activists with Repair Together, who are from Kyiv, did not have partying in mind when they began soliciting local volunteers to repair destroyed buildings in villages outside the capital, in areas liberated this spring from Russian occupation. The volunteers would clear away debris and make small repairs. The group would then post about their work on Instagram to try to encourage more people to help.</p> <p>After each cleanup, the activists would organize a concert or other entertainment, often for children. The locals — worn out from five months of relentless shelling and missile strikes — were enthusiastic. And so Repair Together decided to combine music-making with the repair work.</p> <p>The idea of a rave was born.</p> <p>Ms. Burianova said the group hoped to clean 25 buildings with rave parties before winter arrived. The recent party, in Yahidne, a village north of Kyiv, was the first.</p> <p>Unfortunately, there is no shortage of cleanup sites, and their numbers are growing daily. As of Aug. 8, about 131,000 buildings in Ukraine had been destroyed by Russian shelling and missile strikes, according to the Kyiv School of Economics. The Ministry of Culture estimates that about 65 village cultural clubs have been destroyed. These are similar to community centers, and in many villages, before the war, often held disco parties every Friday night.</p> <p>For many of the about 200 partygoers who turned up for the rave in the destroyed House of Culture in Yahidne, it was the first time in months they had put on party clothes.</p> <p>“I haven’t played for five months,” said D.J. Recid, who once played in Kyiv’s ultra-popular No Name club. “It’s the best rave I can imagine now,” he said.</p> <p>“We dance together, and we repair together,” he added.</p>

Yahidne, a village in the Chernihiv region, was occupied by Russian forces on March 3, and liberated by the Ukrainian army on March 31. Many houses in the village were ruined, but the occupation is also known for a particularly grim episode.

While the Russians controlled the village, more than 300 people, including 77 children, were imprisoned in a dank basement at the village school. They were used as a human shield for the Russian troops based there. Ten of the captives died.

Many of the villagers in Yahidne were grateful to see the activists organize the recent rave.

“We feel that the village is not empty when they are here,” said Viktoria Hatsura, 29, whose son was also helping to clean up the rubble. Mrs. Hutsura, together with her three children, spent almost a month in captivity in the basement during the Russian occupation.

She said she was happy to see so many young people willing to bring positive emotions and help to her village.

Other residents in Yahidne praised the effort, but not the techno music.

“I can’t say I like the music but I’m grateful to these children for their work,” said Oksana Yatsenko, 42, who lives close to the House of Culture.

Before the war, Kyiv parties had become known far beyond Ukraine’s borders. Raves in industrial facilities, semi-abandoned buildings, clubs and the open air on riverbanks took place regularly. Now, destroyed villages are the backdrop.

At the Yahidne party site, black burn marks scarred the red brick walls of the House of Culture, which currently has no roof. In the middle of the dance floor was a heap of rubble.

The crowd, holding shovels and buckets, energetically nodded and stomped to the beat, while filling up the buckets and bags. The D.J. played on a stage decorated with a tinsel curtain, fluttering and sparkling in the sunshine. Speakers were perched on tripods amid the rubble. All around was plenty of exposed brick. Some local children turned up to help.

“I was always clubbing before the war,” said Solomiya Yaskiv, 23, a publicity manager at a technology company in Kyiv. “Right now there are almost no parties in Kyiv and anyway I am not mentally ready for them. Here, it’s different, I can once again enjoy cool music and look at stylish and beautiful people, while doing something useful.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/15 Ukraine’s factories moving west
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/15/business/war-ukraine-factories.html
GIST	<p>It is an unusual arrangement for unusual times: Above a factory floor in Lviv, Ukraine, where Volodymyr Mysysk has relocated his furniture-making business, he and his 15 employees have become roommates. They have brought their children and their dogs, and share a kitchen above the machinery where they spend their days reviving a company that could have been destroyed by the war.</p> <p>But Mr. Mysysk, 23, and his workers, who came to Lviv from the bombarded city of Kharkiv in eastern Ukraine, have benefited from a spirit of solidarity and a government policy that aims to rescue industries threatened by an invading Russian army and help reassemble them, piece by piece, in cities along Ukraine’s western frontier.</p> <p>This region is quickly being remade into the new economic heartland of Ukraine, with more than 200 transplanted businesses that make just about everything, including paint, construction materials and parts for electric vehicles.</p>

Factories in Russian-occupied areas were packed up and moved on trains and trucks, and are being resurrected in the west. Manufacturers are creating jobs and hunting for skilled workers. Now closer to Poland — Ukraine's gateway to Germany and western Europe — the reborn businesses are forging ties with the European Union, which Ukraine hopes to join soon.

"The main motivation for them to come here is that they stay in Ukraine," said Andriy Moskalenko, the deputy mayor of Lviv responsible for economic affairs. "Whether they come from Kharkiv, Kyiv, Chernihiv — they are all Ukrainian. We have to support them," he added, "because Russia has destroyed a lot."

Ukraine's economy is expected to contract by over a third this year. Inflation is rising, and is likely to climb above 30 percent, the country's central bank recently said, and the finance minister recently announced the country had reached an agreement to stop paying some foreign creditors.

Under a government relocation program, Mr. Mysysk was able to offer workers at his small company, Roomio, an opportunity: Join him in the relative safety of Lviv and keep their jobs, although it meant living in close quarters with their boss until they could find their own lodgings.

Emotionally, it wasn't always easy: "I tried not to look depressed, because I wanted to encourage everyone," said Mr. Mysysk, who moved large chunks of the assembly line to Lviv in a bakery truck lent by a neighboring bread maker. It took a month to move everything out of the old factory, by then pockmarked from shelling and gun battles.

"I would smile and say everything is good, even when I wasn't sure I believed it," he said.

But the financial and political support companies like his have received, Mr. Mysysk said, has been an inspiration — and a reminder of just how critical businesses are for helping keep the economy afloat.

Bigger companies are working as fast as possible to piece themselves back together — though it is a daunting task trying to map out a business plan amid the constant uncertainty of war.

Oleksandr Oskalenko, the managing director of Pozhmashina, a maker of fire trucks and agricultural vehicles, halted production in March at its sprawling, modern factory in Chernihiv, the site of a brutal siege by the Russians, and looked to the safety of his 550 employees.

"Things had been developing really well in Ukraine," he said. "We still had problems with corruption, but those problems were getting less, and the economy was improving. But with Russia's invasion, half of the country stopped working."

When President Volodymyr Zelensky announced an economic program in April to rescue businesses from the war-torn east, Mr. Oskalenko jumped at the chance. "We took the factory apart piece by piece and put it onto trains to be shipped out," he said.

The government offered tax breaks and the free transport of equipment on Ukrainian railways. Lviv and other cities nearby have competed fiercely to lure the newcomers, offering additional financial sweeteners including cheap warehouse space, free legal counsel and fast-track paperwork to set up new operations quickly.

Beyond the 200 companies that have already moved, another 800 have applied for relocation, said Volodymyr Korud, vice president of Lviv's Chamber of Commerce.

On a recent weekday, a team of welders worked to remake Pozhmashina's paint shop inside a mammoth Soviet-era warehouse, attaching massive steel beams under streaks of sunlight through broken windows overhead. Once it is finished, agricultural trucks will emerge in fresh coats of olive green, and fire engines in cherry red.

Even so, Mr. Oskalenko said, it is hard to know when things will get back to business as usual.

“The Russians have destroyed big industrial centers that produced energy, chemicals and steel,” he said. “Agricultural fields in occupied areas aren’t producing,” he added. “So making a business plan one to two years out is impossible.”

“But this has given us a perspective for the future,” Mr. Oskalenko said, smiling as he surveyed the rebirth of his old factory. “There are no trenches here, so it helps.”

The war has also brought a flood of Ukrainians to settle in the relative safety of the west, with large numbers looking for work. For executives like Pavlo Chernyak, the head of Matro Luxe, one of Ukraine’s biggest mattress makers, relocating to Ukraine’s western frontier opens what he sees as a great opportunity to offer employment to some of the tens of thousands of people who lost jobs because of the war.

Under whizzing bullets and a hail of Russian rockets, he said, he moved over half of Matro Luxe’s equipment from factories in Kyiv and Dnipro, in the east, and plans on expanding the business. Mattresses are in demand at a time of war — not only for soldiers but for families in bomb shelters or displacement centers. And whenever the war ends, he expects the demand to only grow amid a reconstruction boom.

Mr. Chernyak has vowed to expand his workplace in Lviv of 40 people up to 200 in six months, and up to 500 by the end of the year.

“To me, it’s most important to keep workplaces for people — we need to keep as many jobs here as possible in order to sustain our economy, pay our taxes,” he added.

Even as they hunt for skilled workers, the replanted businesses face additional challenges operating in a wartime economy upended by supply shortages and damaged infrastructure.

At the new location for NPO Rost, a maker of interiors for passenger trains, a managing director, Aleksandr Pletiuk, is scrambling to fulfill orders in a small warehouse. Before Russia’s invasion, the company operated a 33-acre modernized plant in the now embattled city of Zaporizhzhia.

Today Mr. Pletiuk’s warehouse space in Lviv is tiny by comparison, and its production capacity is just 10 percent of the old site. “We’re trying to meet all our contracts as fast as possible, while settling into an empty space that doesn’t even have electricity yet,” he said.

A handful of employees were trying to fill orders for train windows — but they were missing essential pieces needed to make the windows airtight. Because of the war’s impact on Ukraine’s supply chain, Mr. Pletiuk said, it now takes twice as long to procure glass. Fuel costs have more than doubled.

The company signed contracts with clients before the war at fixed prices, but now expenses have surged: metal prices are 50 percent higher. And investments must be made in the new warehouse to bolster production capacity.

Still, Mr. Pletiuk said, “When we win this war, we will have a lot more to do.” Russian attacks have damaged at least 3,900 miles of railways in Ukraine. And many of the railway cars that ferried refugees and supplies will need to be refurbished, and new ones ordered.

He is not alone in seeing a boon: An irony of the great migration of eastern businesses is that it has not always led to financial hardship — but gain.

	<p>Now just about 60 mile from Poland, Mr. Mysysk realized it would be easier to export Roomio's furniture to European customers from Lviv than it was in Kharkiv. After emailing companies around Europe, he has gotten new clients in Denmark and Slovenia — his first export opportunities.</p> <p>"In Ukraine, it's considered cool to work with European countries. So I felt really happy when the first contract was made," he said. "For our work — I hate to say this, but it's actually going better for us."</p> <p>His company is not the only one now starting to find new business in Europe, a trend he believes is important — not just for helping Ukraine keep its economy alive during the war, but for fostering closer ties with the European Union.</p> <p>"The more we are connected, the more the governments of the European Union and Ukraine will understand we should be one," he said.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/15 Shelling hits nuclear plant's fire station
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/15/world/europe/shelling-near-a-ukrainian-nuclear-plant-has-hit-the-fire-station-it-uses-for-emergencies-officials-say.html
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — Shelling near a Russian-occupied nuclear power complex in southern Ukraine has hit the fire station tasked with extinguishing any blazes inside the sprawling facility, officials said Monday, amid ongoing concerns over nuclear safety because of fighting in the area.</p> <p>Russian forces seized control of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, Europe's largest, in March. They have since effectively turned it into a fortress and a launchpad for attacks on Ukrainian positions. In recent weeks, shells have hit the facility and the area around it — with Ukraine and Russia trading blame over who is responsible and the United Nations' nuclear watchdog expressing alarm over the potential for a major nuclear accident.</p> <p>On Monday, the Ukrainian company that oversees the nation's nuclear power plants said that Russian forces had in the past week targeted a fire station outside of the plant that is responsible for extinguishing fires at the facility in the event of an emergency. That poses "a serious risk to the safe operation of the plant," the company, Energoatom, said in a statement.</p> <p>"There are still risks of hydrogen leakage and sputtering radioactive substances, and the risk of fire is high," the statement added, saying that three of the radiation monitoring sensors around the plant have also been damaged by recent shelling.</p> <p>It was impossible to independently evaluate the assessment. Monitors from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, have not been allowed to visit to inspect the facility since it was seized by Russian forces.</p> <p>The United States and the European Union have called for the creation of a demilitarized zone around the plant. The fighting has sent thousands of residents in the area fleeing.</p> <p>While the plant is occupied by Russian forces, it is run by Ukrainian engineers. Energoatom said the engineers were continuing to work to "ensure nuclear and radiation safety, as well as eliminate the consequences of the damage" caused by the shelling, which has shown no sign of letting up.</p> <p>On Monday afternoon Dmytro Orlov, the exiled mayor of the nearby town of Enerhodar, warned residents to stay indoors.</p> <p>"Explosions are heard in Enerhodar," he wrote on Telegram. "Be extremely careful and leave the streets!"</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/15 Calif. 'Big One' something other than quake
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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/15/us/california-superstorm.html
GIST	<p>Drought and wildfire are the horrors dominating headlines this time of year. But California also faces the threat of another kind of calamity, one that could affect the whole state and cause more economic damage than a big San Andreas Fault earthquake.</p> <p>New research by climate scientists has found that the risk of a monthlong superstorm, one that would pummel both Northern and Southern California with rain and snow in astounding quantities, is rising rapidly because of human-caused global warming. The chances each year of one occurring are already around one in 50, the study estimates. And the likelihood keeps growing the more we pump greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.</p> <p>Warmer air holds more moisture, which means atmospheric rivers — the storms that sweep in from the Pacific and are sometimes called “Pineapple Express” events — can carry bigger payloads of precipitation.</p> <p>California has been struck by giant atmospheric-river-fueled storms before. A particularly devastating one in 1861-62 transformed the Central Valley into an inland sea, and Sacramento was flooded so severely that Gov. Leland Stanford had to take a rowboat to his inaugural events in January 1862, according to the Sacramento History Museum. The State Legislature also temporarily moved to San Francisco.</p> <p>The state has since dammed up its rivers and built bypasses to whisk floodwaters away from population centers. If that 19th-century storm hit today, all of this infrastructure would make it less likely to cause destruction. Still, the state is also far more developed — with bigger cities, more valuable farms and businesses, and many more people — which means the consequences could still be great.</p> <p>If there’s good news to report in any of this, it’s that plenty of planners and policymakers are aware of the risks. As I wrote in The New York Times on Friday, the Department of Water Resources is planning to use the new scientific findings to update the state’s flood plans. With the help of supercomputers, they will map out in detail how all of that precipitation will flow through waterways and over land.</p> <p>California is also working to strengthen levees in urban areas of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys to provide protection against 200-year storms, or those with a 0.5 percent chance of occurring in any year. As I found while reporting this interactive story, however, there’s another side to all of these preparations, which is that they’ve turned flood risk into something many Californians never think about.</p> <p>On one level, that’s progress: Most of us have better things to do each day than worry about nature’s wrath. But there are also perils to not thinking you live in a danger zone. You might ignore evacuation orders, downplay storm forecasts, decline flood insurance.</p> <p>“When the government is involved with these levees, most homeowners trust that we’re doing the right thing, and that it’s safe for them to put their life savings in a home,” Ricardo Pineda, a retired engineer for the state, told me as we toured Sacramento’s flood-management works recently.</p> <p>“They love to walk their dogs on the levee,” Pineda said. But “are they prepared for the economic consequences of New Orleans-type flooding?”</p> <p>In Lathrop, near Stockton, the River Islands planned community sits in an area on the San Joaquin River that flooded terribly during a 1997 storm. The developer built extra-wide levees, without using government funds, to protect the charming homes and tidy streets.</p> <p>Susan Dell’Osso, president of River Islands Development, told me that many of her buyers were from the Bay Area and asked tough questions about schools and life in the Central Valley.</p> <p>“They never ask questions about flooding,” Dell’Osso said. She tries to educate them about it, she said. But “they don’t even realize, I think, that there’s a risk.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/15 Rising airfares, flight cancelations looming
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/15/rising-airfares-new-cancellations-loom-ahead-labor/
GIST	<p>Travelers may have to endure another ugly holiday experience at the airport over the fast-approaching Labor Day weekend, according to recent reports.</p> <p>Airfares for the long Sept. 2-5 weekend are up and demand is down from years past as a new round of flight interruptions looms, booking service Kayak said Monday.</p> <p>The average price for a domestic flight over Labor Day weekend is \$372, up 20% from last year and 41% from 2019, the company told The Washington Times. An international flight averages about \$1,021, up 23% from last year and 24% from 2019.</p> <p>Between May 1 and Aug. 8, Kayak said searches for domestic flights during the long weekend fell 9% from last year and 31% from 2019.</p> <p>During the same period, searches for international flights declined 57% from last year and 12% from 2019.</p> <p>On Friday, the Federal Aviation Administration announced Delta will “temporarily cut” some Labor Day weekend flights at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and New York’s LaGuardia and John F. Kennedy airports.</p> <p>Delta cited New York airport construction, large numbers of crew calling in sick, bad weather and air traffic control interruptions as reasons for asking the FAA to waive its minimum slot requirements — issues that could hit other airlines over the next two weeks.</p> <p>“The FAA expects Labor Day will be busy for air traffic, with the heaviest traffic on Thursday and Friday before Labor Day,” the agency said in an email Monday. “We recommend passengers check with their airlines for a status on their flights and check fly.faa.gov to see conditions at a particular airport.”</p> <p>In a separate statement, the Department of Transportation pledged to hold accountable any airline that fails to issue prompt refunds for canceled flights.</p> <p>“The Department expects that when Americans buy an airline ticket, they’ll get to where they need to go safely, affordably, and reliably,” the DOT said in an email.</p> <p>U.S. air carriers have already trimmed thousands of flights from their summer schedules as COVID-era staff shortages leave them struggling to handle a post-pandemic rebound in travel demand.</p> <p>Flight delays have also been common this summer, as the Memorial Day and Fourth of July weekends stranded weary passengers at airports nationwide.</p> <p>Several airlines recently approved pay increases for their pilots, many of who complained of burnout in recent demonstrations outside major airports.</p> <p>Experts say the holiday interruptions could last for years as airlines keep over-booking flights to maximize profits in the wake of a \$54 billion federal bailout that kept them afloat during pandemic shutdowns.</p> <p>“They are continuing efforts to generate working capital selling flights they do not expect to be able to operate,” said Robert W. Mann Jr., an independent airline analyst and consultant in Port Washington, New York.</p> <p>The former American Airlines executive noted that “fares and demand have peaked” as the COVID stimulus funds run out.</p>

	<p>“I expect a more-than-seasonal capacity reduction in the fall as airlines continue to downsize operations to what they can support, despite having sold many of those canceled flights months in advance,” Mr. Mann said.</p> <p>Most of the airlines, including Delta, did not respond to an email. United had no comment.</p> <p>Southwest, which sells its fares directly, referred to a July 28 statement from CEO Bob Jordan noting “less than one percent of scheduled flights” were canceled in May and June. At the same time, Southwest reported a record second-quarter income of \$825 million.</p> <p>As airlines trim flights and raise fares, fewer Americans may want to fly.</p> <p>Kayak reported that a flight to Los Vegas, the most popular Labor Day weekend destination in customer searches, averages \$290 this year.</p> <p>Domestic hotel and car rentals are also seeing increased prices and decreased search volume for Labor Day weekend, the company said.</p> <p>According to the American Legislative Exchange Council, a network of conservative state legislators and private investors, these numbers suggest some travelers are running out of vacation money.</p> <p>“Inflation is still at its highest level in over 40 years and it’s far outpacing the growth in wages,” said Lee Schalk, the council’s vice president for policy. “That means Americans are essentially taking a pay cut each month, with fewer dollars left for vacations, airfare, or car rentals.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/15 California mental health workers on strike
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/aug/15/mental-health-workers-strike-kaiser-permanente-california
GIST	<p>Thousands of mental health workers in California are going on strike to demand that Kaiser Permanente, America’s largest non-profit HMO, better provide “desperately needed” services.</p> <p>As the US grapples with an increase in anxiety and depression brought on by the pandemic, Kaiser patients are waiting months for therapy sessions, according to the union representing the workers.</p> <p>Starting Monday, more than 2,000 workers, including psychologists, therapists, social workers and counselors, are expected to hold daily rallies at picket lines across the state, from Sacramento to the Bay Area to Fresno, as part of an open-ended strike.</p> <p>The move comes after a year of failed negotiations between Kaiser, which serves 9 million people in the state, and the union. Kaiser has rejected union proposals seeking to expand the workforce and “improving access to care”, according the union, while the company argues the central issues relate to wage increases and time spent on administrative tasks.</p> <p>Despite reporting record profits last year, Kaiser has just one mental health clinician for every 2,600 patients, the union said. Patients who should receive therapy weekly instead are waiting up to eight weeks, according to the union, and overwhelming caseloads are pushing therapists to leave the company entirely.</p> <p>“Patients are getting ripped off while Kaiser’s coffers are bulging,” Sal Rosselli, the president of the National Union of Healthcare Workers, said in a statement. “We don’t take striking lightly but it’s time to take a stand and make Kaiser spend some of its billions on mental health care.”</p> <p>The need for mental health services surged during the pandemic as anxiety and depression rose in the US and across the world. In the first year of the pandemic, anxiety and depression increased by 25% globally, according to the World Health Organization. The US surgeon general has warned America’s youth are facing a mental health pandemic.</p>

But Kaiser patients aren't getting the care they need, the union says, accusing the healthcare giant of violating clinical guidelines around treatment and state laws. California previously fined Kaiser \$4m for problems with its mental health services, including extended wait times. The state is investigating Kaiser's behavioral health services after receiving complaints from patients and providers.

"We're serving a strike notice because our patients aren't receiving needed services," Shay Loftus, a Kaiser psychologist participating in the strike, said in a statement. "We're not willing to be part of a system that disrespects the work we do and prevents us from providing ethical care."

Kaiser argues it's facing the same shortage of workers as other US care providers because there aren't enough mental healthcare professionals to meet the rising demand and that the union is "exploiting current challenges as a bargaining tactic". The company has hired nearly 200 clinicians since 2021 and used virtual care to improve access, according to Kaiser.

"Despite all that we are doing, we, like others, are challenged to meet the demand and know more must be done. We are focused on continuing to find new ways to meet our members' and patients' mental health needs," Deb Catsavas, the senior vice-president of human resources at Kaiser Permanente Northern California, said in a statement.

"This strike is an unnecessary tactic to increase the union's leverage at the bargaining table, making it harder, not easier, to deliver mental health care," Catsavas said.

Patients will continue to receive care from workers who opt not to strike, Catsavas said, adding that "nonurgent" appointments may be rescheduled.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/15 Falling oil prices defy predictions; next?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/15/business/energy-environment/oil-prices.html
GIST	<p>When Russia invaded Ukraine last spring, energy experts were predicting that oil prices could reach \$200 a barrel, a price that would send the costs of shipping and transportation into the stratosphere and bring the global economy to its knees.</p> <p>Now oil prices are lower than they were when the war began, having dropped more than 30 percent in barely two months. On Monday, news of a slowing Chinese economy and a cut in Chinese interest rates sent prices down further, to less than \$90 a barrel for the American benchmark.</p> <p>Gasoline prices have fallen every day over the last nine weeks, to an average of less than \$4 nationwide, and prices of jet fuel and diesel are easing as well. That should translate eventually to lower prices for things as diverse as food and airline tickets.</p> <p>But it would be premature to celebrate. Energy prices can spike as easily as they can plummet, unexpectedly and suddenly.</p> <p>China, where Covid-19 lockdowns remain widespread, will eventually reopen its cities to more commerce and traffic, increasing demand. Withdrawals of oil from the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve will end in November, and it will need to be refilled. And a single unexpected event — say, a hurricane flooding the Houston Ship Channel and taking several Gulf of Mexico refineries out of commission for weeks or even months — could send fuel prices soaring.</p> <p>That sort of catastrophe could send tidal waves through the American and even global economy since energy prices are fundamental to the prices of everything that is shipped and produced, whether it be grain or building supplies.</p>

“Oil prices always have the capacity to surprise,” said Daniel Yergin, the energy historian and author of “The New Map: Energy, Climate and the Clash of Nations.”

Prices could ease further if Iran agrees to a new draft nuclear agreement after it backed off from its demand that the Islamic Revolutionary Guards be removed from the U.S. terrorism list, opening a potential spigot of at least one million more barrels a day of Iranian petroleum exports.

In addition, the prospect of a continuing increase in interest rates has many investors and economists predicting a recession — and a reduction in demand — even though unemployment is low and profits remain resilient.

“I think oil prices could go lower,” said Sarah Emerson, president of ESAI Energy, an analytics company. “We have several factors coming together at the same time: We have China reducing its imports of crude oil in the third quarter, we have the end of the summer gasoline season, we have concerns about an economic slowdown, and frankly, plenty of supply.”

But she quickly added, “That is not to say prices won’t go back up,” noting the coming end to the drawdown of the strategic reserve — from which the United States, in coordination with other countries, has been releasing up to a million barrels a day — and the possibility that Europe will substitute oil burning for natural gas in case there is a cold winter.

Fuel prices, which consumers can see go up and down on a daily basis at their corner filling stations, play an outsize role in economic perceptions. “The price of fuel is not that big a deal,” said Mark Finley, a Rice University energy economist, “but if you look at its impact on consumer confidence, it seems to be a proxy for how you feel about the world in general.”

Roughly 3.5 percent of total personal spending by Americans is devoted to gasoline, according to an RBC Capital Markets report in June. Lower-income and rural workers who have older, less fuel-efficient vehicles and drive longer distances to work are particularly hurt by high gasoline prices.

Overall, fuel prices are less important than in the past because people are driving more efficient cars and are lately working more from home. But the more people spend on gasoline or diesel, the less they have to spend on everything else.

When oil prices fall, many costs for industry and agriculture, including chemicals and fertilizer, generally follow. And shipping becomes more economical. But when they rise sharply, as they did in 2008 and in the 1970s, they tend to increase other prices and suppress the overall economy. And political fallout often ensues.

Predicting energy prices has always been a fool’s game because there are so many factors, including the expectations of traders who buy and sell fuel, the political fortunes of unstable producing countries like Venezuela, Nigeria and Libya, and the investment decisions of state and private oil company executives.

Today those complexities are particularly difficult to assess.

“(When) Will Oil Bulls Start Revising Forecasts Down?” was the title of a recent Citigroup commodities report. With a global recession “on the horizon,” it said, “which is more likely, a robust hurricane season, seeing prices skyrocketing? A return of Iranian barrels? Or a recession, with oil in the \$60s by year-end/early 2023?” If a barrel of oil should drop to \$60 a barrel, average gasoline prices in the United States would probably fall at least another dollar a gallon.

But a few days after Citi’s projections, Goldman Sachs Commodities Research predicted a price bounce as fuel demand rebounds. “We see growing tail risks to commodity prices inherent in the scenario of sustained growth, low unemployment and stabilized household purchasing power,” the report concluded.

The war in Ukraine remains a major variable in the worldwide supply outlook since Russia normally supplies one of every 10 barrels of the global 100-million-barrel-a-day market. Since the invasion of Ukraine, daily Russian exports have declined by about 580,000 barrels. European sanctions on Russian oil are expected to tighten somewhat more by February, reducing daily Russian exports by an additional 600,000 barrels.

And as Russia further tightens its grip on natural gas sales to Europe in tit-for-tat sanctions retaliation, European utilities will be forced to burn more oil to substitute for gas.

The energy markets are sending mixed signals. In forecasts last week, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries said it expected petroleum demand to be weaker than originally expected this year and next. Still, the cartel expects global demand for 2023 to expand to nearly 103 million barrels a day.

Supplies are gradually climbing because of expanded production in Guyana, Brazil and the United States. Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf countries are following suit, though probably not nearly as much as the Biden administration would like. OPEC and its partners, including Russia, had promised to raise their production by 600,000 barrels a day in July and August, although they have fallen somewhat short of that mark.

The outlook for refining is also improving, which could lower prices for gasoline and other fuels. While refining capacity in Europe and the United States has declined in recent years, it is growing in the Middle East, Latin America, Asia and Africa.

Another factor has been relatively tepid demand in the United States, which accounts for more than one-third of global gasoline demand. The summer driving season normally increases consumption by 400,000 barrels a day from Memorial Day to Labor Day. But so far this summer, gasoline demand has been flat with April averages, according to J.P. Morgan Commodities research.

That trend could change as prices go down. Americans increased their gasoline consumption by 508,000 barrels a day last week from the week before, according to the Energy Department. Still, consumption remained more than 300,000 barrels a day less than a year ago.

And then there is the larger shift away from fossil fuels. A growing number of energy investors are skeptical about the future of oil-based transportation and say prices over the long term will come down.

“Demand for electric vehicles is going up,” said Daniel Sperling, a transportation expert at the University of California, Davis. “That sends a lot of signals.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/15 Ukraine chips away at Russia-held region
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/15/world/europe/ukraine-retake-southern-region.html
GIST	<p>MYKOLAIV REGION, Ukraine — In their summer campaign to drive Russian troops from the southern region of Kherson, Ukraine’s forces have decimated Russian command centers and ammunition depots, severed supply lines with precision strikes on key bridges, and sown terror among collaborationist officials with a spate of car bombings, shootings and, Ukrainian officials say, at least one poisoning.</p> <p>But in the sunbaked fields along the Kherson Region’s western border, the Ukrainian fighters who would be called on to deliver the knockout blow in any successful effort to retake territory remain pinned down in their trenches. The cuts to supply lines have not yet eroded Moscow’s overwhelming advantage in artillery, ammunition and heavy weaponry, making it difficult, if not impossible, for Ukrainian forces to press forward without suffering enormous casualties.</p> <p>“Without question we need a counteroffensive; I sincerely believe it will come,” said a 33-year-old lieutenant with the call sign Ada, who commands an outpost of trenchworks in the Mykolaiv region, a few miles from the Russian lines in Kherson.</p>

But he said: “We need the advantage in numbers, we need the advantage in heavy weapons. Unfortunately, this is a bit of a problem for us.”

Ukrainians have acutely felt the loss of the Kherson region, with its vast black-earth farmlands famous for producing the country’s tastiest tomatoes and watermelons. Just about the entire region was seized in the first weeks of the war after Russian troops struck from their bases in the Russian-occupied Crimean Peninsula. Since then, Ukraine’s leaders have plotted to take it back.

But doing so presents major challenges.

Russia maintains overwhelming superiority in troop numbers and ammunition, and in recent weeks the Kremlin has moved to reinforce its military in the region, shifting resources there from the fighting in the eastern Donbas. Even if Ukraine’s military is able to squeeze Russian forces out of the rural farmlands, they will most likely have to fight a vicious urban battle for the city of Kherson, which could lead to huge losses in lives and property.

Ukraine is also operating under a condensed timeline. The Kremlin plans to hold a referendum on Kherson’s absorption by Russia in mid-September, and disrupting it would require Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelensky, and his generals, to take some kind of significant offensive action soon, experts said.

“The real limitations the Ukrainians face is that moving forward in the combat environment today is really difficult,” said Phillips P. O’Brien, a professor of strategic studies at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. “Unless you have total command of the skies and the ability to clear out the area in front of your troops, those moving forward are in real danger of getting eaten away.”

But Russia’s position in Kherson is also precarious, Professor O’Brien and others said.

Though Ukrainian troops have not advanced for weeks in Kherson, their artillery campaign appears to have borne fruit, slowing the flow of Russian arms, equipment and troops into the region, Ukrainian officials say. Using high-precision weapons such as the American-supplied High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, or HIMARS, Ukrainian forces have pounded the three bridges over the vast Dnipro River that connect thousands of Russian troops to their supply lines in occupied Ukrainian territory east of the river.

The strikes have rendered these bridges “inoperable,” said Nataliya Gumenyuk, the spokeswoman for the Ukrainian military’s southern command. Over the weekend, Ukrainian forces launched yet another strike on the Antonivsky Bridge, the main supply artery into the city of Kherson.

The question now is whether the pressure on supply lines will be sufficient to cripple the fighting capacity of Russian troops and perhaps force the Kremlin to order at least part of the force to withdraw from Kherson and fall back across the river. Several Ukrainian officials in the region said this week that some Russian field commanders had already begun to move their headquarters east of the river, although two senior Ukrainian military officials said there was no evidence of this.

Along with additional forces, Russia may have already moved large amounts of equipment and ammunition into the region, allowing it to fight on for some time, even with supply lines severely disabled, said Ben Barry, a senior fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, a research group based in London.

And even with the bridges destroyed, Russia would still have options to resupply.

“The prospect of being isolated from the rest of their forces won’t do anything for the morale of Russian troops defending in the Kherson Oblast,” Mr. Barry said. “But on the other hand, Russia has a lot of military bridging, it’s got quite a lot of ferries, it’s got riverboats.”

Over the long run, pressure from Ukraine could turn Russia's precarious position into an untenable one, said Michael Kofman, director of Russian studies at C.N.A., a research institute in Arlington, Va. But this could take months, not weeks, he said, and could sap the Ukrainian military of the resources it would need to pursue other campaigns.

"The position that the Russian military has taken in Kherson is the least defensible of the territories they have occupied," Mr. Kofman said. "Once those bridges are gone and once the railway bridge connector into Kherson is gone, then they're going to have a very hard time getting ammunition there. They'll have to retreat to positions that, at best, are outside the city."

Looking east toward the Russian lines last week from behind a sandbag-reinforced trench position just over the border with the Kherson region, the task of pushing Russian forces back appeared daunting.

Each day a withering barrage of Russian strikes inevitably kills a handful of troops there and wounds many more, Ada, the local commander, said. A near miss by a grad rocket a day earlier charred the grass around one dugout position and, in the field nearby, the tail section of another rocket was visible sticking out of the ground. Periodically, a low-decibel thud reverberated across the plains.

It is the same all across the roughly 50-mile Kherson front, which cuts northeast to southwest through farmland and once-tidy villages now mostly blown apart and abandoned.

Ukraine's commanders and military analysts say that any push forward would require vastly more troops and equipment than Ukraine has in the Kherson theater at the moment, as both armies fight on several fronts.

In the Luhansk region in the east, Ukrainian officials claimed to have hit a base that housed mercenaries from the [Wagner Group](#), a private military organization with close ties to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia. There was no immediate comment from the authorities in Russia. In the southeast, shelling near the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant hit a fire station that responds to blazes inside the sprawling facility, officials said on Monday, adding to [concerns over nuclear safety](#) in the area.

At a hotel a safe distance from the front lines in the Mykolaiv region, but very far from home, refugees from the Kherson region have grown increasingly anxious.

Natalya Larionovskaya, who fled with her children and parents in April, said her husband, who remained behind, had told her that Russian artillery and tank units had taken up positions in her village and that all but 10 square meters of the surrounding fields had burned.

Her husband has become pessimistic about Ukraine's chances to retake the region and liberate their home, but Ms. Larionovskaya has tried to boost his spirits.

"I tell him, 'Don't worry, no one is going to abandon anyone,'" she said.

Maj. Gen. Dmytro Marchenko, the commander of Ukraine's forces in the region, recently acknowledged bubbling frustrations with the slow pace of Ukraine's efforts to retake Kherson, but he said he could give no timetable for the start of major offensive actions.

"I want to tell the people of Kherson to be a little patient — that it will not be as long as everyone expects," General Marchenko said in an interview last week with RBK-Ukraine. "We have not forgotten about them. No one will abandon our people, and we will come to help them. But they need to wait a little longer."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/15 Inside Russia's brutal Ukraine detentions
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/15/world/europe/ukraine-russia-detention-prisoners.html

KHARKIV, Ukraine — It was a particularly dangerous time for a military-age man in Russian-occupied northern Ukraine, where Russian troops were losing ground before a ferocious Ukrainian counterattack this past spring. That was when soldiers from the occupying forces seized a young auto mechanic while he was walking in his home village with his wife and a neighbor, blindfolded him, bound his hands and shoved him into a bus.

It was the beginning of six weeks of “hell,” said Vasiliy, 37, who like most people interviewed for this article declined to give his surname for fear of reprisals. Shunted from one place of detention to another, he was beaten and repeatedly subjected to electrical shocks under interrogation, with little understanding of where he was or why he was being held.

He was far from the only one. Hundreds of Ukrainian civilians, mainly men, have gone missing in the five months of the war in Ukraine, detained by Russian troops or their proxies, held in basements, police stations and filtration camps in Russian-controlled areas of Ukraine and ending up incarcerated in Russia.

Thousands have passed through this [sprawling, ad hoc screening system](#) in the war zone, but no one knows exactly how many have been sent to Russian jails. The United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine has documented 287 cases of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions of civilians by Russia and says the total is almost certainly more, but probably in the hundreds, rather than the thousands.

Vasiliy is one of a small number of people detained in Russia who have returned to Ukraine. He was released after about six weeks and eventually made his way back through a long, roundabout journey after a total of three months away. Back at work in an auto repair shop in the northeastern city of Kharkiv, he said he was just glad to have survived.

“It was shaming, maddening, but I came out alive,” he said. “It could have been worse. Some people were shot.”

Russian forces have been detaining Ukrainians since they first invaded in February, but the experiences of most of the civilians have remained opaque. Interviews with men who were detained, and with families of men who are missing, provide fresh details of one of the enduring horrors of the nearly six-month-old war.

Interrogators had asked for information on Ukrainian positions and military groups, he said, but the interrogations had often been pointless, as the next blow came before he could answer a question. “They don’t believe anything you say, even if you’re telling the truth,” he said. “You cannot prove your innocence.”

Other families, less fortunate than Vasiliy’s, have been left searching for missing relatives, torn with anxiety about where they are or even if they are alive.

“I go to sleep crying, and I wake up crying,” said Olha, 64, whose son was detained and beaten unconscious by Russian troops but was released after three days, and whose grandson, they learned from the International Committee of the Red Cross, is being held in a Russian pretrial detention facility.

Their village, Vilkhivka, outside Kharkiv, was overrun by Russian troops in late March. Warplanes were bombing the village, and the Russian soldiers told residents they had an hour to evacuate, she recounted in an interview. “They said that Vilkhivka was going to be razed,” she said.

Olha and several family members hurried with other villagers through the fields for five miles to where they were told a Russian military truck would take them to a waiting fleet of buses. Her son and grandson did not make it, so her husband went back to find them. As she sat on one of the buses, Russian soldiers pulled off two young men in bandages who she thought might have been wounded Ukrainian soldiers.

In front of the other passengers, the Russian soldiers beat the men, she said, and then shot them in the head. “They were left in that forest,” she said. “I closed my eyes and cried.”

Her grandson, Mykyta, 20, has not been seen since. Olha was evacuated with her daughter-in-law to Russia, where they were put up in a hostel. She returned home in July and was reunited with her husband, who had survived on his own. Her son managed to join them in Russia, and he and his wife have remained there to try to locate Mykyta.

They have no idea if he will face charges, Olha said, as they have no access to him, even by phone. The Red Cross could tell them only that he was in custody, she said.

Russia has denied torturing or killing Ukrainian civilians and claims that it only attacks military targets.

Most of the civilians detained by Russia in the war zone are men with military experience or of fighting age. In the occupied areas, Ukrainians with leadership qualities — activists, local officials and journalists — are most likely to be detained, human rights officials said. But many ordinary civilians have been caught up in what is often a chaotic and arbitrary roundup.

Vasiliy, the mechanic, said he had been picked up by chance because he was walking down a street in Tsyrkun, northeast of Kharkiv, when members of the security forces were conducting a raid. His wife and a female neighbor were told to go home, but his hands were bound with tape and he was shoved into a bus as men in balaclavas burst into a nearby house firing weapons, forcing four men to the ground. Those men were then thrown into the same bus with Vasiliy.

Among them was Vadym, 36, a welder and mechanic who lived in Tsyrkun with his wife and small son. Vadym had ventured out to get diapers and baby food for the toddler, according to his sister Darya Shepets, 19. She said that some of those detained had served as border guards during hostilities with Russia in 2014 but that he had no ties to the military.

The detainees were taken to the basement of a house in the village, where they were beaten and interrogated, Vasiliy said. Later they were moved to another village, where they were held in a group of about 25. After about three weeks, he was taken with a dozen men to a detention facility at Ukraine's northern border.

"It is difficult to understand who was detained and for what," he said. "They brought in this grandfather, who did not understand at all why he was detained. He was riding his bicycle with a sack of corn."

He added: "A young boy was brought in. He was just riding his bike to his grandmother's."

Detainees were hauled off individually for interrogation, which involved heavy beatings, including some to the head, and electrical shocks. "It is as if your whole body is pricked with needles," Vasiliy said. Human rights officials have recorded similar accounts of electrical shocks being used.

"We were given food and drink once a day," Vasiliy said. "Sometimes we could go without food for two or three days. There was no toilet; they gave us bottles to use. We slept together on car tires. No sanitary standards to speak of."

He said Russian interrogators had been obsessed with rooting out members of Nazi groups — the main reason given by Moscow for its military operation against Ukraine.

"They said they had come to liberate us from the Nazis, from the Ukrainian authorities, so that we can live better," he recounted. "I told them: 'I worked all the time at the service station. I didn't see Nazis. Everything was good.'"

His response enraged his interrogators, he said, adding: "They start to mess with you again. 'You're lying. You have Nazis here. Whole groups have been created. All your people have tattoos.'"

The four men seized in the house raid, Vadym and his three friends, were taken away in the third week. They have not been seen or heard from since. Vasiliy thought they were being released and even told Vadym to speak with his wife back in the village, saying she would help him with food for his toddler.

But when he got home at the end of June, he was shocked to realize that he was the only one to have made it back.

He got lucky when the leadership of the unit holding his smaller group changed and the detainees were suddenly turned out onto the street. Because of the fighting, they had to travel into Russia, where they were detained again, this time by officers of the Russian spy agency, the F.S.B., who Vasiliy said offered him money and a job to work for them.

He refused, and after three days, they let him go. “They probably realized that we were useless to them,” he said. Looking like a homeless man, with a large beard and unkempt hair, Vasiliy managed to borrow money from a friend of a friend to obtain new documents and travel through the Baltic countries and Poland back to Ukraine.

Vadym’s sister, Ms. Shepets, tried for months to find any information on her brother’s whereabouts, writing letters and scouring the internet. She ultimately learned from a Ukrainian government agency that he was in Russian custody. Then a friend found what appeared to be a prison mug shot of him in a Russian online chat room.

“I was hysterical, to be honest, because it was only half my brother,” Ms. Shepets said. “He is very thin in the photo. You can see hollows under his eyes, and his collarbones.”

The photo was subsequently removed from the social media group. “Now we don’t know anything — there is no more connection; there is nothing,” she said, wiping away tears.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/15 Kenya presidential election winner; dispute
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/15/world/africa/kenya-election-william-ruto.html
GIST	<p>NAIROBI, Kenya — On a continent where military coups and rubber stamp elections have proliferated in recent years, Kenya stands out.</p> <p>Despite its flaws and endemic corruption, the East African nation and economic powerhouse has steadily grown into a symbol of what is possible, its democracy underpinned by a strong Constitution and its hard-fought elections an example to other African nations seeking to carve a path away from autocracy.</p> <p>But Kenya has just hit a speed bump.</p> <p>On Monday, a winner was declared in its latest presidential election, ending an unpredictable battle that had millions of Kenyans glued to their televisions and smartphones as the results rolled in. William Ruto, the president-elect, beamed as he addressed a hall filled with roaring supporters, lauding the “very historic, democratic occasion.”</p> <p>But the losing candidate, Raila Odinga, rejected the result even before it was announced. A fracas erupted in the hall where Mr. Ruto had been speaking, and where the votes had been counted, sending chairs and fists flying. And four electoral commissioners stormed out, casting doubt on a result that is almost certain to end up in court.</p> <p>And so the election hangs in the balance, scrutinized not just at home but across a continent where Kenya’s rambunctious democracy is among those that are viewed as indicators of progress.</p> <p>“We do not have the luxury to look back, we do not have the luxury to point fingers,” Mr. Ruto said. “We must close ranks to work together.”</p>

It started out as a day of hope.

Early in the morning, several thousand people began packing into the giant hall in a Nairobi suburb to hear the election results, following an arduous six-day count that had the country on tenterhooks.

Mr. Ruto and Mr. Odinga had been neck-and-neck throughout the count, sometimes separated by as few as 7,000 votes, according to unofficial news media tallies. Those razor-thin margins left many nervous: Although its democracy is robust, Kenya's elections can be vicious, and its last three contests were marred by disputed results that led to protracted crises, court cases and street violence that in 2007 killed over 1,200 people.

Chastened by those failures, the electoral commission had gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure a clean vote. Within 24 hours of polls closing last Tuesday evening, it had posted to its website images showing the results from nearly every polling station — over 46,000 of them.

But as Wafula Chebukati, the chief electoral commissioner, prepared to announce the winner on Monday, one of Mr. Odinga's top aides called an impromptu news conference outside.

"This was the most mismanaged election in Kenya's history," Saitabao Ole Kanchory told reporters in a flurry of invective that described the counting center as "a crime scene" and called on those in charge "to be arrested."

Moments later, pandemonium erupted inside the hall.

Supporters of Mr. Odinga, including Mr. Ole Kanchory, stormed the dais, throwing chairs on the floor and clashing with security officials brandishing truncheons. Foreign diplomats and election observers fled to a backstage area — but a choir that had been belting out gospel songs for much of the day continued to sing.

Once the situation calmed, Mr. Chebukati emerged to deliver a short speech in which he noted that two of his commissioners had been injured in the melee — and others harassed, "arbitrarily arrested" or disappeared — before proceeding to announce the results.

Mr. Ruto received 50.49 percent of votes, he said, against 48.85 percent for Mr. Odinga, a difference of just 233,211 votes but enough to avoid a runoff.

In a speech that appeared intended to project authority and offer reassurance, Mr. Ruto thanked his supporters and vowed to work for the good of Kenya. He promised to set aside the bitterness of the campaign — and the chaotic scenes minutes earlier — to concentrate on the country's flailing economy.

"There is no room for vengeance," Mr. Ruto said, flanked by his wife and by his running mate, Rigathi Gachagua. "Our country is at a stage where we need all hands on deck to move it forward. We do not have the luxury to look back."

Celebrations erupted in the streets of Eldoret, a stronghold for Mr. Ruto in the Rift Valley, where there was a deafening cacophony of horns, whistles and chants filling the downtown area.

But in much of the country, his victory was overshadowed by a major development: Four of the seven electoral commissioners refused to verify the vote, defying Mr. Chebukati and decamping to a luxury hotel where they denounced "the opaque nature" of the final phase of the count.

Those commissioners, it turned out, had been appointed by Mr. Odinga's most prominent ally in the race, President Uhuru Kenyatta, who is barred by term limits from running again.

Speaking to journalists a few hours later, Mr. Ruto dismissed their declaration as a "side show." Under Kenyan law, he said, Mr. Chebukati alone is responsible for declaring the winner.

“Legally, constitutionally, the four commissioners pose no threat at all to the legality of the declaration,” Mr. Ruto said.

Still, the drama suggested that a day that should have signaled the end of the presidential contest might end up being just another chapter in the nail-biter race that has had Kenyans on the edge of their seats since the vote on Tuesday.

The candidates were a study in contrasts.

Mr. Odinga, 77, a leftist from one of Kenya’s most storied political dynasties, made his first bid for the presidency in 1997. He ran three more times, always losing, before trying again this year.

Although he did once serve as prime minister, Mr. Odinga’s electoral defeats embodied the broader frustrations of his ethnic group, the Luo, which has never controlled the Kenyan presidency in all the years since the nation gained independence from Britain in 1963.

Mr. Ruto, 55, the country’s vice president and a wealthy businessman, cast himself as champion of Kenya’s “hustler nation” — the disillusioned, mostly young strivers struggling to gain a foothold. He frequently told voters about his humble origins, including a barefoot childhood and an early career selling chickens on the side of a busy highway.

That image contrasted with Mr. Ruto’s considerable wealth, which has grown during his political career to include a luxury hotel, thousands of acres of land and a large poultry processing plant.

While the “hustler” pitch resonated powerfully with some Kenyans, others just shrugged. Just 40 percent of Kenyans under 35 registered to vote in this election, and the 65 percent turnout was sharply down from the 80 percent reported in the 2017 election.

The low turnout appeared to be a rejection of what many saw as a bad choice between candidates from their country’s discredited political elite.

In voting for Mr. Ruto, millions of Kenyans overlooked the charges he once faced at the International Criminal Court, which a decade ago accused him of whipping up the storm of violence after the 2007 election that nearly pushed Kenya into a civil war.

The charges included murder, persecution and forcing people to leave their homes, but the case collapsed in 2016. The Kenyan government — Mr. Ruto was vice president — engaged in what the court said was “witness interference and political meddling.”

Mr. Ruto was running not just against Mr. Odinga but, in effect, against his own boss, Mr. Kenyatta, whom he accused of betrayal for backing Mr. Odinga.

Instead of delivering votes for his chosen successor, Mr. Kenyatta suffered a humiliating rebuke from voters in his heartland, the Mount Kenya region, where ethnic Kikuyus rejected his allies across the board. Even at the polling station where Mr. Kenyatta cast his vote on Tuesday, Mr. Ruto scored a sweeping majority, the results showed.

Debilitating economic troubles provided a bleak backdrop to Tuesday’s vote. The tourism-reliant economy has been battered in recent years, first by the coronavirus pandemic, then by Russia’s assault on Ukraine, which caused food and fuel prices to rise even more amid a global downturn.

“Maize flour, cooking oil, cooking gas — everything is going up,” Abzed Osman, an actor who also works in tourism, said as he stood in line to vote on Tuesday in the Nairobi district of Kibera, Africa’s largest shantytown.

	<p>By Monday evening in Kisumu County, one of Mr. Odinga's strongholds in western Kenya, hundreds of protesters who had been eagerly awaiting the results began demonstrating and burning tires, witnesses said.</p> <p>Hours later a spokesman for Mr. Odinga, Dennis Onsarigo, said the candidate planned to address the nation on Tuesday.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/15 Border apprehensions fiscal year record
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/15/us/politics/immigration-border.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Apprehensions of migrants crossing the southwestern border were down for the second month in a row in July, but the number in just the first 10 months of the government's fiscal year already exceeds the total during the previous year, setting a record, according to data released on Monday.</p> <p>Unauthorized crossings typically decline during the summer months. Even so, the number of apprehensions each month continues to be higher than most of the previous years. That pattern has continued since the spring of 2021, a trend Republicans blame on President Biden's campaign promise to be more welcoming to immigrants than his predecessor, and on the policies of his administration.</p> <p>By the end of June, border officials apprehended people more than 1.74 million times, breaking the record from the total number during the government's 2021 fiscal year of more than 1.73 million, which at the time was the highest number of illegal crossings recorded since at least 1960. The government's fiscal year ends Sept. 30, and at this rate, the total number of crossings for the year is likely to exceed two million.</p> <p>Officials estimate about 18 percent of the people apprehended in July were repeat crossers, a pattern some blame on the continued enforcement of a pandemic-driven public health order, which gives border officials the authority to turn migrants away at the border but does not penalize those who cross illegally again.</p> <p>Many of the migrants coming across are seeking asylum, which was significantly restricted through several policies during the Trump administration when there was also a spike in migration. One of those policies is the use of the public health rule, known as Title 42, which the Biden administration tried to end in late May.</p> <p>On Monday, the commissioner of Customs and Border Protection publicly acknowledged the humanitarian impact of the public health rule. In a Twitter post, the commissioner, Chris Magnus, said the policy, which has been kept in place under court order, "comes at a heavy cost to many asylum seekers."</p> <p>The high number of crossings comes as the United Nations says there are more displaced people around the world than ever before. Migrants are going to great lengths to get to the United States, putting their lives in the hands of smugglers. They are fleeing violence, poverty and life under authoritarian governments in their own countries. Many are looking to the United States for economic opportunities after many jobs were lost during the pandemic.</p> <p>While about half of the migrants arrested on the southwestern border have been turned away under the public health order, the administration has released hundreds of thousands of migrants into the country to face removal proceedings. These immigrants are given temporary permission to stay because the government cannot immediately remove them — sometimes because the United States lacks diplomatic relations with the countries they came from, and thus cannot repatriate them, or there is not enough space to detain them.</p> <p>"The border crisis is out of control," Representative Jim Jordan, Republican of Ohio, said in a Twitter post on Monday.</p>

	Immigration continues to be a hot issue going into the midterm elections this fall. A recent Gallup poll found that more people want an overall reduction in immigration than felt that way in 2020. Most of those who want less immigration identified as Republican, according to the findings.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/15 Ukraine: strike hits Russia mercenary base
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/15/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#images-of-damage-have-been-posted-on-a-social-media-channel-linked-to-the-shadowy-wagner-group
GIST	<p>A Ukrainian strike hit a Russian base in eastern Ukraine that housed mercenaries from a private military group with close ties to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, Ukrainian officials have claimed.</p> <p>Reports of a strike in the Luhansk region on a base for the organization, the Wagner Group, began to emerge on Sunday night when a channel on Telegram that is widely associated with the group posted pictures that purported to show the site of the strike. The New York Times has independently verified that the images are from a building in the Russian-occupied town of Popasna that a Russian journalist had earlier identified as a Wagner base.</p> <p>Anton Gerashchenko, an adviser to Ukraine's minister of internal affairs, shared similar images on Twitter and said that Ukraine had used the American-supplied HIMARS weapon system to hit the base.</p> <p>Wagner first emerged in 2014, during Russia's annexation of Crimea. U.N. investigators and rights groups say Wagner troops, which have been seen in Syria, Libya and the Central African Republic, have targeted civilians, conducted mass executions and looted private property in conflict zones. Wagner's shadowy existence allows Russia to downplay its battlefield casualties and distance itself from atrocities committed by Wagner fighters, according to those who have studied the group.</p> <p>On Monday morning, Serhiy Haidai, the head of the Ukrainian regional military administration in Luhansk, asserted that the Wagner base in Popasna had been "destroyed."</p> <p>"The Armed Forces of Ukraine again successfully struck the enemy's headquarters," Mr. Haidai wrote in a Facebook post, adding that the number of casualties was not yet known.</p> <p>There was no immediate comment from the authorities in Russia or from Yevgeny Prigozhin, the secretive businessman and Putin ally widely associated with the private security company.</p> <p>Reports of the strike infuriated many Russian military bloggers, who criticized an earlier social media post by one of their own. That post, they said, had exposed the headquarters' location. The post has since been deleted.</p> <p>"Congratulations to all decent war reporters, it will be even harder for us to work now," Dmitri Steshin, a reporter for Komsomolskaya Pravda, a popular pro-Kremlin tabloid, wrote on Telegram. "And it will be easier for those who criticized us."</p> <p>Russia has tried to make up some of its manpower shortages in Ukraine by using mercenaries from Wagner, which gained prominence as it deployed to help accomplish the Kremlin's foreign policy goals in Syria and various African nations.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/15 Russia offers to sell weapons to world
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/15/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#putin-offers-arms-to-russias-many-allies-at-a-defense-industry-trade-show
GIST	Russian forces in Ukraine are struggling with artillery shells that miss their targets and rapidly diminishing stocks of precision munitions in a war of aggression that has left Russia isolated from the West.

	<p>But on Monday, President Vladimir V. Putin addressed a defense industry trade show outside Moscow with a different message: Russia, he said, wants to sell its arms to the world.</p> <p>Mr. Putin stood on an outdoor stage in front of a largely uniformed crowd and offered to sell Russia's "most advanced weapons" to what he said were Moscow's "many allies." The weapons, he claimed, are helping achieve Russia's goal of "step-by-step liberating the lands of the Donbas," Ukraine's eastern region.</p> <p>"Russia sincerely cherishes its historically strong, friendly, truly trusting ties with the states of Latin America, Asia and Africa," Mr. Putin said. "We are ready to offer our allies and partners the most modern types of weapons, from small arms to armored vehicles and artillery, military aviation and unmanned aerial vehicles."</p> <p>Russian state media said delegations from 72 countries were attending the trade show, called "Army 2022." Belarus, India, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan each mounted their own exhibits, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.</p> <p>Iran's Ministry of Defense exhibited its military drones, according to the Russian state media. The United States says Iran has offered to sell Russia drones for use in Ukraine, where Russia is facing a shortage of unmanned aircraft.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/15 WA teachers test free science curriculum
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab/hungry-for-more-student-interest-wa-teachers-test-a-free-science-curriculum/
GIST	<p>BOTHELL — Some 2½ years after the Northshore School District became the first American school system to go remote for the coronavirus, teachers from across Washington state arrived at the district's headquarters in Bothell last week for a different type of experiment.</p> <p>In a second-floor conference room, chemistry teachers furiously rubbed their heads with balloons to generate an electric charge and investigate why lightning strikes. In the parking lot, biology teachers burned pieces of peat — decayed plant material — to understand why fires are emerging in the Arctic Circle.</p> <p>For years, many of these teachers say they've had to scavenge for a science curriculum interesting and substantive enough for their high school students, who have grown trickier to engage since the pandemic began. So they've decided to help beta-test a new one.</p> <p>"I'm tired of doing the same thing," said Anita Emery, a teacher at Bellarmine Preparatory School in Tacoma.</p> <p>During a three-day training, the educators learned how to teach science in a way that lets students drive the lessons, using a free and open-source curriculum developed by OpenSciEd. The organization aims to fill what it says is a vacuum of science curricula that meet the Next Generation Science Standards, a set of national recommendations for science education adopted by 20 states including Washington.</p> <p>Washington is one of 10 states where teachers are testing the curriculum and providing feedback for improvement. The state pays for teachers to train on OpenSciEd from a mix of funding sources, including federal pandemic relief dollars for schools and legislative funding set aside for school districts to meet the NGSS standards.</p> <p>Because the curriculum is largely free (except for intentionally low-budget lab materials), it has appealed to teachers in lower-income school districts that haven't purchased a science curriculum for use across all their schools, said Will Baur, a former science teacher for Battle Ground Public Schools who now works for the state facilitating trainings on OpenSciEd.</p>

A departure from traditional science curricula, which usually have students memorize vocabulary terms and place heavy emphasis on teacher lectures, OpenSciEd starts every unit with a phenomenon in nature, like lightning. Students then discuss and investigate their own questions based on their observations. Teachers are given a template to track which student speaks and to whom.

“They have kids doing science, not just learning facts,” said Jamie Yoos, a chemistry teacher at Bellingham High School who trained the chemistry cohort at the Bothell training.

To make this shift, the teachers must play the part of students in their training on OpenSciEd. Once they’re in student mode and experiencing a lesson, they are not allowed to speak in technical terms or ask overly advanced questions.

“How’s everyone doing?” Yoos asks the room, kicking off a lesson about lightning on the first day of training.

Several respond in slight groans, taking their acting jobs seriously.

Yoos shows the room several GIFs of different kinds of lightning strikes, and asks the educators to write down and share their observations and questions. He studiously takes down notes on their responses at the front of the room.

“I wonder what it would sound like? Is it more like kaching!?” asks Baur from the back of the room. “Or more like kuchoo!”

A few minutes later, they see some slides of charts and heat maps of where lightning strikes occur. Yoos asks the room to describe the patterns in the chart.

Founded four years ago, OpenSciEd is funded by philanthropy, including the Carnegie Corporation, the Hewlett Foundation and the Gates Foundation. (Education Lab receives funding from the Gates Foundation.) A group of university researchers develops the curriculum materials. More than 40,000 teachers nationwide have registered for the OpenSciEd materials, which so far are only publicly available for the middle school grades.

“There was a belief when it came out that it was a pent-up demand,” and that has turned out to be true, said Jim Ryan, executive director of OpenSciEd.

Teachers at the training say they’re excited about the approach because it encourages students to problem-solve rather than memorize. Emry says her students sometimes have trouble translating what they’ve learned into other contexts.

There’s certainly room for improvement in science learning. On statewide tests, only about 46% of kids were proficient in science in 2022. When compared to students in other states, kids in Washington performed about five points better than the national average on the National Assessment of Educational Progress science test administered by the federal government.

The topics in the curriculum are chosen through polling of students across the country. In the midst of social anxiety wrought by online schooling, it may encourage students to talk more, said Carlee Walker, a chemistry teacher at Fort Vancouver High School.

“My classes were 98% just me talking,” Walker said. “Being able to elicit all that participation, I think it’s going to be powerful.”

There are a few unknowns and limitations. Walker mentioned it could be difficult to use in classrooms like her own, where several students are learning English. And OpenSciEd has yet to release any data publicly

about efficacy, though in Baur's case, students' performance on state exams improved once he began teaching with OpenSciEd's approach.

On the second day of training, the educators arrive to find a contraption on a table in the back of the room: a giant plastic container filled with water, with spouts on either side. As the water makes its way down on either side, it passes through hollowed-out cans and lands in a bucket. Around the side of the contraption, two pennies, barely kissing each other, are fastened to two metal clasps.

Using small LED lights, a balloon attached to a straw, tinsel and other household objects, the paired off students must find a way to detect and produce static.

Anita Emry, a private school teacher in Tacoma, and Debra Hawker-Schreiner, a teacher from Kent, approach the contraption. Emry braces her fingertips on the table and uses her other hand to guide the tinsel near the cans that the water poured through. Deb hovers beside her, and they both let out an "Ah!" when they see the tinsel move toward the water.

Another pair of teachers decide to test the LED light. They fasten its coils to the end of the metal clasps. The teachers are supposed to be taking turns at the contraption, and working at their table in the meantime, but everyone rose from their seats to crowd around the pair.

"I thought we were doing this independently," jokes Calvin Atkins, another teacher from Bellingham.

Finally, a faint spark emerges from the bulb — the water molecules need time to create an electric charge — and the whole room coos.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/15 AMR pays \$1.4M in fines: ambulances late
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/seattle-ambulance-contractor-pays-1-4m-in-fines/
GIST	<p>The private ambulance contractor for the Seattle Fire Department paid nearly \$1.4 million last year for violating the terms of its contract with Seattle and arriving late to calls.</p> <p>American Medical Response contracts with Seattle to provide basic life support ambulance services and transport low-acuity patients. Under the contract, AMR has target response times they must meet at least 90 percent of the time to avoid paying fines.</p> <p>The first AMR ambulance must arrive in under 11.5 minutes. Last year, AMR ambulances arrived late around 20 percent of the time, according to records KUOW obtained from the Seattle Fire Department. Many ambulances were a few minutes late. A few took an hour or more to show up.</p> <p>In a statement, a spokesperson for AMR said the longer response times are due to staffing shortages and long wait times at emergency rooms.</p> <p>"During these waits for a hospital bed, which can range from 40 minutes to four hours, ambulance crews continue providing high-quality patient care either in the ambulance or in the receiving areas of the emergency department," the statement said. "However, ambulances held at local emergency rooms with patients cannot respond to other 911 calls."</p> <p>Seattle Fire Chief Harold Scoggins was not available for an interview.</p> <p>In a statement, department spokesperson Kristin Tinsley said, "Chief Scoggins recognizes that there is a larger challenge with the entire health care system for transporting and getting patients to emergency rooms. His hope is that AMR can meet their contractual obligations so SFD units can remain available for the next response."</p>

	<p>She said AMR’s failure to meet its obligations “keeps our units on scene for longer and presents a challenge for SFD to provide the best customer service to the patients we treat.”</p> <p>The company’s performance didn’t improve much during the first part of 2022. AMR racked up nearly \$500,000 in fines as of May 1. The money goes into the city of Seattle’s general fund.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/15 Apple crop forecast: smaller this year
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/washingtons-apple-crop-is-forecast-to-be-smaller-this-year/
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — Washington’s apple crop is forecast to be a bit smaller this year because of the cool spring.</p> <p>The Washington State Tree Fruit Association on Monday projected the 2022 Washington state fresh apple crop will total 108.7 million forty-pound boxes. That’s an 11.1% decrease from 2021’s 122.3 million boxes.</p> <p>“We are pleased with the size of the harvest, particularly in the face of a long, cold spring,” said Jon DeVaney, WSTFA President.</p> <p>The estimate shows that five popular apple varieties make up the majority of the harvest. Gala leads production at 20%, Red Delicious and Honeycrisp are each projected at 14%, followed by Granny Smith at 13.4%, and Fuji at 12.7% of total production.</p> <p>Cosmic Crisp, which is grown only in Washington state, is 4.6% of the harvest, up from 3.2% last year.</p> <p>Washington apples are sold in over 40 countries and are the state’s top farm commodity, representing 20% of the state’s farm-gate agricultural value in 2020. On average, 30% of the harvest is exported.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/15 Recalls: Capri Sun, King’s Hawaiian, swings
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/money/consumer/capri-sun-wild-cherry-drinks-recalled-possible-cleaning-solution-contamination-kraft-heinz/531-21f3d4bf-4fdb-4a8c-98a3-6d74060ee3e2
GIST	<p>INDIANAPOLIS — Thousands of cases of wild cherry Capri Sun are being recalled due to cleaning solution possibly being mixed into the popular children's beverage.</p> <p>Kraft Heinz announced a voluntary recall of approximately 5,760 cases of Capri Sun Wild Cherry Flavored Juice Drink Blend beverages.</p> <p>The voluntary recall comes after diluted cleaning solution, which is used on food processing equipment, was inadvertently introduced into a production line at one of Kraft Heinz's factories, the company said. The company discovered the drinks were contaminated after receiving several complaints from consumers who said their Capri Suns tasted different.</p> <p>Kraft Heinz said it's working with retail partners and distributors to remove impacted products from circulation.</p> <p>However, if you have Capri Sun in your fridge or cabinets, you'll want to check it. The affected products are only the wild cherry flavored Capri Suns that have a "best when used by" date of June 25, 2023.</p> <p>If you find you have one of the affected Capri Sun packages, the company said you should not drink it and can return it to the store where it was purchased.</p> <p>Consumers can contact Kraft Heinz from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday, at 1-800-280-8252 to see if a product is part of the recall and to receive reimbursement.</p>

Recall roundup

Several other recalls were announced Monday, including one for millions of infant swings and rockers, and another for King's Hawaiian pretzel products.

Pittsburgh-based [4moms is recalling](#) about 2 million MamaRoo swings and 220,000 RockaRoo rockers in the U.S after reports that one baby died and another was hurt after getting tangled in hanging straps, [the Consumer Product Safety Commission said Monday](#). Another 70,000 of the products are being recalled in Canada.

According to the recall notice, the swings and rockers were sold at BuyBuy Baby and Target stores nationwide from January 2010 through August 2022 for between \$160 and \$250. They were also sold online on [4moms.com](#) and Amazon.

King's Hawaiian has [issued a recall](#) for its pretzel products due to concerns over possible bacteria contamination with an ingredient from one of its suppliers.

The recall covers all [King's Hawaiian](#) Pretzel Slider Buns, Pretzel Hamburger Buns and Pretzel Bites products. According to the company, the move is a precaution after an ingredient used in the pretzel products was [recalled by Lyons Magnus for possible contamination](#).

The recall doesn't impact any other King's Hawaiian products. The company said it plans to resume producing pretzel products once it has confirmed the safety of all ingredients and made sure all the current product has been thrown out.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/15 DOJ objects to public release of affidavit
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/15/us/politics/trump-search-affidavit.html?
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Justice Department objected on Monday to making public the affidavit used to justify the search of former President Donald J. Trump's home in Florida, saying its release would "compromise future investigative steps" and "likely chill" cooperation with witnesses.</p> <p>In a 13-page pleading, filed in a federal court in southern Florida in response to requests by The New York Times and other news organizations to make public the evidence included in the document, prosecutors suggested that the department has undertaken a broad, intensive inquiry into Mr. Trump's handling of some of the most secret documents of the government after he left office.</p> <p>The prosecutors acknowledged interviewing witnesses in connection with the investigation of Mr. Trump's retention of the material. They also wrote that releasing the document could compromise the continuing investigation.</p> <p>"Disclosure of the government's affidavit at this stage would also likely chill future cooperation by witnesses whose assistance may be sought as this investigation progresses," prosecutors wrote. They added that releasing the affidavit could harm "other high-profile investigations" as well.</p> <p>One of the reasons proposed by the government for not releasing the affidavit was to protect the identities of witnesses against death threats. On Monday, prosecutors in Pennsylvania unsealed charges against a man accused of repeatedly threatening to kill F.B.I. agents in the days after Mr. Trump's property was searched.</p> <p>The magistrate judge who signed the search warrant, Bruce E. Reinhart, will ultimately decide whether the affidavit should be released. It is unclear when he will rule on the news media's request.</p> <p>The legal — and political — aftershocks from the search were still reverberating a week after F.B.I. agents appeared at the resort while the president was at his club in Bedminster, N.J.</p>

Mr. Trump, who has accused Attorney General Merrick B. Garland of conducting a politically motivated “witch hunt” and roughly rifling through his family’s possessions, claimed on Monday that the government “stole my three Passports,” in a post on Truth Social, the online platform he founded.

By late Monday, the Justice Department admitted the error and contacted Mr. Trump’s legal team to retrieve the three passports — two of them expired and the third an active diplomatic passport, according to one of the former president’s lawyers, Evan Corcoran, and a spokesman for the department.

In a statement late Monday, the F.B.I. said that it “follows search and seizure procedures ordered by courts, then returns items that do not need to be retained for law enforcement purposes.”

Mr. Garland [agreed last week to release the warrant](#) used to search Mr. Trump’s private club, but has resisted attempts to make public the underlying affidavit, a far more sensitive document that should contain, among other things, the reasons prosecutors believe there was probable cause that evidence of a crime could be found at Mar-a-Lago, Mr. Trump’s estate in Palm Beach, Fla.

The investigation into the mishandling of government documents, while known for months, was not considered to be as significant as the department’s sprawling investigation into the attack on the Capitol, which has been moving closer to Mr. Trump and his top advisers.

Federal agents removed top secret documents when they searched Mr. Trump’s residence last week as part of an investigation into possible violations of the Espionage Act and other laws, according to a [search warrant](#) made public on Friday.

[At least one lawyer](#) for Mr. Trump signed a written statement in June asserting that all material marked as classified and held in boxes in a storage area at Mar-a-Lago had been returned to the government, four people with knowledge of the document said.

Even as the former president counterattacked, new details emerged of how Mr. Trump and his inner circle flouted the norms, and possibly the laws, governing their handling of government records.

According to two people with knowledge of the situation, Mr. Trump and his chief of staff, Mark Meadows, the man who oversaw presidential records in the chaotic closing days of the administration, failed to organize an effort to collect, box and deliver materials to the National Archives — as prior presidents, and Mr. Trump’s own vice president, Mike Pence, did.

Instead, they often focused on settling political grievances and personal grudges, they said.

In the weeks leading up to Mr. Trump’s departure from the White House, officials discussed what to do about material that he had at various points taken up to the residence and that needed to be properly stored and returned.

By then, the staff secretary, Derek Lyons, known for trying to keep systems in place, had left the administration. Mr. Meadows said he would address such issues, according to a senior administration official.

While all this was happening, a very different scenario was playing out just across West Executive Avenue, in Mr. Pence’s less frenetic office.

As Mr. Trump sought to hold on to power, two of Mr. Pence’s senior aides — Marc Short, his chief of staff, and Greg Jacob, his counsel — indexed and boxed all of his government papers, according to three former officials with knowledge of the work.

Mr. Jacob spent the bulk of his final few days in government preparing the final boxes, with the goal of ensuring that Mr. Pence left office without a single paper that did not belong to him, one of the officials said.

HEADLINE	08/15 Britain monkeypox outbreak 'signs slowing'
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/britain-monkeypox-outbreak-shows-signs-slowing-88398305
GIST	<p>LONDON -- British health officials say the monkeypox outbreak across the country "shows signs of slowing" but that it's still too soon to know if the decline will be maintained.</p> <p>In a statement on Monday, the Health Security Agency said authorities are reporting about 29 new monkeypox infections every day, compared to about 52 cases a day during the last week in June. In July, officials estimated the outbreak was doubling in size about every two weeks. To date, the U.K. has recorded more than 3,000 cases of monkeypox, with more than 70% of cases in London.</p> <p>The agency also said more than 27,000 people were immunized with a vaccine designed against smallpox, a related disease.</p> <p>"These thousands of vaccines, administered by the (National Health Service) to those at highest risk of exposure, should have a significant impact on the transmission of the virus," the agency said. It said the vast majority of cases were in men who are gay, bisexual or have sex with other men and that vaccines were being prioritized for them and for their closest contacts and health workers.</p> <p>Last month, Britain downgraded its assessment of the monkeypox outbreak after seeing no signs of sustained monkeypox transmission beyond the sexual networks of men who have sex with men; 99% of infections in the U.K. are in men.</p> <p>British authorities said they bought 150,000 doses of vaccine made by Bavarian Nordic, the world's only supplier. The first 50,000 doses have already been rolled out or will be shared soon with clinics across the country and the next 100,000 vaccines are expected to be delivered in September.</p> <p>Monkeypox spreads when people have close, physical contact with an infected person's lesions, their clothing or bedsheets. Most people recover without needing treatment, but the lesions can be extremely painful and more severe cases can result in complications including brain inflammation and death.</p> <p>Globally, there have been more than 31,000 cases of monkeypox reported in nearly 90 countries. Last month, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak to be a global emergency and American officials have classified their epidemic as a national emergency.</p> <p>Outside of Africa, 98% of cases are in men who have sex with men. With only a limited global supply of vaccines, authorities are racing to stop monkeypox before it becomes entrenched as a new disease.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/15 Child in Florida tests positive monkeypox
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/7th-child-us-tests-positive-monkeypox/story?id=88417787
GIST	<p>A child in Martin County, Florida, has tested positive for monkeypox, state health data shows.</p> <p>Across the U.S., at least seven children have now tested positive for monkeypox. The child in Florida is between the ages of 0 and 4 years old, according to the state health data.</p> <p>The additional pediatric case comes after health officials in Maine announced Friday that they, too, had confirmed a positive monkeypox case in a child.</p> <p>In Maine, no further information about the case has been released due to concerns over patient privacy, officials said.</p> <p>"Maine CDC [Center for Disease Control and Prevention] is working to identify any others who may have been exposed and make vaccination available to close contacts," officials wrote in a press release.</p>

In addition to the cases in children reported in Maine and Florida, two cases have been confirmed in California, as well another two in Indiana, and a case in a non-U.S. resident reported in Washington, D.C.

The majority of cases in the current monkeypox outbreak have been detected in gay, bisexual or other men who have sex with men. However, health officials have repeatedly stressed that anyone can contract the virus.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has previously warned that there has been some preliminary evidence to suggest that children younger than 8 years old are at risk of developing more severe illness if infected, alongside pregnant people and those who are immunocompromised.

However, last week, in an effort to protect the youngest Americans, the Food and Drug Administration issued an emergency use authorization that allows health care for children under 18 who are at high risk of monkeypox to be vaccinated.

Across the globe, nearly 32,000 cases of monkeypox have now been reported, including more than 11,000 cases in the U.S. -- the most of any country, according to the CDC. All but one U.S. state -- Wyoming -- have now confirmed at least one positive monkeypox case.

Monkeypox primarily spreads through prolonged skin-to-skin contact with infected people's lesions or bodily fluids, according to the CDC. In addition to lesions, which can appear like pimples or blisters, the most common symptoms associated with monkeypox are swollen lymph nodes, fever, headache, fatigue and muscle aches.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Iran 'written response' nuclear deal talks
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iran-submits-written-response-nuclear-deal-talks-88425048
GIST	<p>DUBAI, United Arab Emirates -- Iran said Tuesday it submitted a "written response" to what has been described as a final roadmap to restore its tattered nuclear deal with world powers.</p> <p>Iran's state-run IRNA news agency offered no details on the substance of its response, but suggested that Tehran still wouldn't take the European Union-mediated proposal, despite warnings there would be no more negotiations.</p> <p>"The differences are on three issues, in which the United States has expressed its verbal flexibility in two cases, but it should be included in the text," the IRNA report said. "The third issue is related to guaranteeing the continuation of (the deal), which depends on the realism of the United States."</p> <p>Tehran under hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi has repeatedly tried to blame Washington for the delay in reaching an accord. Monday was reported to have been a deadline for Iran's response.</p> <p>Nabila Massrali, a spokesperson for the EU on foreign affairs and security policy, told The Associated Press that the EU received Iran's response on Monday night.</p> <p>"We are studying it and are consulting with the other JCPOA participants and the U.S. on the way ahead," she said, using an acronym for the formal name for the nuclear deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.</p> <p>The EU has been the go-between in the indirect talks as Iran refused to negotiate directly with America since then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the accord in 2018.</p> <p>From Washington, State Department spokesman Ned Price said the U.S. would share its own response to the EU.</p>

	<p>“We do agree, however, with (the EU's) fundamental point, and that is that what could be negotiated has been negotiated,” Price said.</p> <p>He added that Iran had been making “unacceptable demands” going beyond the text of the 2015 nuclear deal, which saw Iran drastically limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.</p> <p>“If Iran wants these sanctions lifted, they will need to alter their underlying conduct,” Price said. “They will need to change the dangerous activities that gave rise to these sanctions in the first place.”</p> <p>As of the last public count, Iran has a stockpile of some 3,800 kilograms (8,370 pounds) of enriched uranium. Under the deal, Tehran could enrich uranium to 3.67% purity, while maintaining a stockpile of uranium of 300 kilograms (660 pounds) under constant scrutiny of surveillance cameras and international inspectors.</p> <p>Iran now enriches uranium up to 60% purity — a level it never reached before and one that is a short, technical step away from 90%. Nonproliferation experts warn Iran now has enough 60%-enriched uranium to reprocess into fuel for at least one nuclear bomb. Meanwhile, the surveillance cameras have been turned off and other footage has been seized by Iran.</p> <p>However, Iran still would need to design a bomb and a delivery system for it, likely a monthslong project. Tehran insists its program is peaceful, though the West and the International Atomic Energy Agency say Iran had an organized military nuclear program until 2003.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/15 Recall: Home Run Inn frozen pizza
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/home-run-inn-frozen-pizza-recalled-potential-contamination/story?id=88418506
GIST	<p>A frozen food manufacturer issued a recall Sunday for more than 13,000 pounds of frozen meat pizza over possible contamination, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service said.</p> <p>Home Run Inn Frozen Foods said the food products "may be contaminated with extraneous materials, specifically metal," the USDA said.</p> <p>The company discovered the problem after it received complaints from consumers, according to the USDA.</p> <p>"There have been no confirmed reports of injuries or adverse reactions due to consumption of these products. Anyone concerned about an injury or illness should contact a health care provider," the agency said in a statement.</p> <p>Over 13,000 pounds of a frozen meat pizza are being recalled after metal was found in the product, according to the USDA.</p> <p>The company said the recall affects its 33.5-ounce cartons containing "Home Run Inn Chicago's Premium Pizzeria Deluxe Sausage Classic Pizza" with a "best by" date of "12/03/22." The frozen meat pizzas were produced on June 6, 2022, the USDA said.</p> <p>The affected products recall bears an establishment number "EST. 18498-A" inside the USDA mark of inspection, according to the agency.</p> <p>Anyone who purchased these products is urged not to consume them, the USDA said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/15 Credential theft still top attack method
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/08/credential-theft-is-still-top-attack.html
GIST	<p>Credential theft is clearly still a problem. Even after years of warnings, changing password requirements, and multiple forms of authentication, password stealing remains a top attack method used by cyber criminals.</p> <p>The latest report from the Ponemon Institute shares that 54% of security incidents were caused by credential theft, followed by ransomware and DDoS attacks. 59% of organizations aren't revoking credentials that are no longer needed, meaning passwords can go unattended and dormant like a sitting duck (similar to what happened with Colonial Pipeline). And Verizon's Data Breach Investigations Report cites that nearly 50% of all data breaches were caused by stolen credentials.</p> <p>The stats don't lie. Cybercriminals are advancing, there's no doubt, but if there's an option to take the path of least resistance, they'll take it. Too often, that means compromising passwords and exploiting vulnerable access points.</p> <p>Credential Theft and Critical Access</p> <p>The Verizon report also states that stolen credentials are most often used to target some form of a web application. Web applications are one of the top attack vectors, according to the report, which is a problem considering organizations across industries are finding digital solutions and using internet-enabled technology to streamline operations. Take the manufacturing industry, for example: if a PLC malfunctioned, a contractor or vendor used to physically fix the issue at the manufacturing facility. Now, the repairs can be done remotely since PLCs can be connected to the internet, and third-party technicians can use remote access to connect to and fix the PLC.</p> <p>The healthcare sector faces the same situation. Healthcare facilities use internet-enabled devices to quickly share data, access patient records, and grant access to remote vendors to connect to machines.</p> <p>We're in an evolving, digital era where companies can become more efficient, productive, and profitable by automating tasks and introducing new technology to their workflow. But, since a lot of that involves connecting devices to the internet and granting remote access to third-party vendors as we've just seen, it also means introducing risk at each access point.</p> <p>If you can use the internet to access an asset (whether that's a network, server, or data), so can a bad actor. And if you can use credentials to unlock it, guess what – so can a bad actor. Add third-party remote access into the mix and you have a nasty combination of vulnerabilities.</p> <p>Organizations need to play catch-up when it comes to the security of their credentials, IoT, and third-party vendor connections. If they don't, they'll be playing a different kind of catch-up: remediating all the damage a bad actor has already done.</p> <p>Protect Credentials With Password Vaults</p> <p>It might seem like the problem is unavoidable. We're creating a potential gateway for a bad actor to exploit every time we create a password that leads to a critical resource, whether that password is meant for an internal or external user.</p> <p>For those who have gone too long thinking, "I don't need to worry about password management," — it's time to worry. Or it's at least time to do something about it. Credentials are the keys to the kingdom, whether that means they can get you down the road to the entire kingdom via third-party remote access or they take you directly to the kingdom of mission critical assets and resources. Either way, protecting credentials by using password vaults is arguably the best way to manage passwords and ensure they stay out of the wrong hands.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Microsoft disrupts Russia cyber espionage
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/microsoft-russian-cyberespionage/
GIST	<p>Microsoft claims to have disrupted a prolific Russian state-backed threat group known for conducting long-running cyber-espionage campaigns against mainly NATO countries.</p> <p>In an update on August 15, the tech giant said it had disabled accounts used by the "Seaborgium" group for reconnaissance, phishing, and email collection, and updated detections against its phishing domains in Microsoft Defender SmartScreen.</p> <p>Also known by threat researchers as Callisto Group, ColdRiver, TA446 and other monikers, Seaborgium is a "highly persistent threat actor" that focuses most of its time on the US and UK, and occasionally the countries of the Baltics, Nordics and Eastern Europe.</p> <p>"Once successful, it slowly infiltrates targeted organizations' social networks through constant impersonation, rapport building, and phishing to deepen their intrusion," said Microsoft.</p> <p>"Seaborgium has successfully compromised organizations and people of interest in consistent campaigns for several years, rarely changing methodologies or tactics."</p> <p>Since the start of the year, it has targeted over 30 organizations: mainly defense and intelligence consulting companies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), think tanks, and higher education.</p> <p>The group also targets individuals such as former intelligence officials and Russian citizens living abroad, Microsoft said.</p> <p>After conducting reconnaissance on its targets, the group might try to establish rapport by contacting them on social media. Soon after, it will send a phishing email purporting to contain content of interest to the recipient.</p> <p>Malicious URLs may be located in the body of the email, a clickable button designed to open an attachment, or a OneDrive link which takes the user to a PDF file containing a URL.</p> <p>The end goal is credential theft and then data exfiltration.</p> <p>"Regardless of the method of delivery, when the target clicks the URL, the target is directed to an actor-controlled server hosting a phishing framework, most often EvilGinx. On occasion, Microsoft has observed attempts by the actor to evade automated browsing and detonation by fingerprinting browsing behavior," Microsoft explained.</p> <p>"Once the target is redirected to the final page, the framework prompts the target for authentication, mirroring the sign-in page for a legitimate provider and intercepting any credentials. After credentials are captured, the target is redirected to a website or document to complete the interaction."</p> <p>Once Seaborgium has access to the victim's email account, it will look to exfiltrate intelligence data and, on occasion, approach other people of interest via these compromised accounts in order to access sensitive info.</p> <p>Sometimes, it will even set up forwarding rules from victim inboxes to enable persistent data collection, Microsoft said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/15 Cybersecurity never been more unstable
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/cybersecurity-never-been-unstable-than-it-is-now/

The world of cybersecurity is nearing a point of no return, with the number of data breaches, password leaks, and cyber attacks on businesses reaching a level that has never been seen before. Currently, there is a cyberattack on a company [every 39 seconds](#), with each successful attack costing businesses millions of dollars.

While cybersecurity has been an issue for decades, this problem is only growing, with recent years seeing a dramatic rise in the number of cases recorded. In 2021 alone, 30,000 websites were hacked every single day, with there being an average of [50% more attacks per week](#) than in 2020.

From personal data to business documents and financial information, nothing is completely secure, with the diverse array of cyber hacking tools currently available seemingly trumping cybersecurity deployments at every turn. In this article, we'll be taking a deep dive into the current state of cybersecurity, demonstrating why this industry has become such a disaster.

Equally, we'll touch on a few products that are currently running in counter to the rising threat, taking a look at the cutting-edge responses that the very best minds in cyber defenses have come up with.

Let's get right into it.

A Whirlwind Tour Through Notable Breaches

When delving into famous breaches in cybersecurity, a peculiar trend instantly arises. While there were some major breaches in the early 2010s, the middle section of this decade was fairly quiet. This all then changed around 2019, when major breaches began happening every few months. In 2021, the [Log4Shell vulnerability](#) caused massive tech companies around the world to leave their doors open for easy entry.

Since then, the world of cybersecurity has only gotten worse, with some of the most disastrous breaches happening since the beginning of COVID. Cybersecurity became such a pressing matter during this period that [The White House](#) even released executive orders on Open Source and private software cybersecurity defense protocols, urging citizens and companies to take more care when online.

Some notable breaches that have occurred over the last decades are:

- **2013, Yahoo** – Still holding the record for the most people affected by a singular breach, this backdoor [hack affected over 3 billion accounts](#) and caused loss of personal information. This gave hackers the answer to security questions, passwords, names, email addresses, phone numbers, and any other personal information attached to an individual's Yahoo account.
- **2014, JPMorgan** – This breach had [76 million households corrupted](#) by a singular cyberattack. While the information leaked was luckily not financial in nature, it did release personal emails, phone numbers, names, and more. Since then, JPMorgan now spends \$250 million each year to secure its data properly.
- **2021, Microsoft** – One of the most impactful cybercrimes in US history happened in January of 2021 when all [Microsoft Exchange email servers were hacked](#). By using the Log4Shell vulnerability, hackers were able to deploy malware on a range of systems and impact over 60,000 companies worldwide due to Microsoft's deployment in a range of companies through Teams and Outlook.
- **2021, Facebook** – With [over 530 million users exposed](#), this modern breach saw a huge loss of personal data, with this being the latest breach since the company began all the way back in 2012.
- **2021, Comcast** – The largest breach during 2021 went to Comcast, with this brand having 1.5 billion records purged from their databases by hackers. [This huge data breach](#) took millions of accounts, internal IP addresses, node names, and other major indicators for further hacking. The attack on this company has been somewhat of a snowball moment, with the information liberated leading to a range of further hacks.

While these are not the only notable attacks that have occurred during this time, they are some of the biggest. Even from this small selection, one can see that the frequency with which a major attack occurs is becoming much more often. While massive cyberattacks were once a thing of rarity, they now crop up in some regard practically every single week.

A Global Issue

Alongside the widespread impacts of breaches, this isn't just an issue that's plaguing a singular nation. While the United States has been the focus of a large number of cybersecurity breaches, that doesn't mean that other nations aren't equally feeling the strain.

Countries around the world, including giants like China, the UK, and many leading countries within Europe, are similarly seeing rising amounts of cybercrime. This was further boosted by the 2020 pandemic, with this major global event driving people online in ways that we've never seen before.

While global connectivity was already rampant, the need to use tech tools to facilitate every part of the working day during COVID further led to breaches.

Let's quickly dive into how the pandemic has further scaled the threats currently targeting the world's cyber defenses.

How the Pandemic Increased Cybercrime

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic that surfaced at the beginning of 2020, the world has become rife with cybercrime. There are several factors that have led to this occurrence, with the levels of cybercrime across the globe now reaching unprecedented levels.

Most notably, the biggest change that has caused this surge in the number of cases of cybercrime around the world has been directly due to the movement away from traditional working structures. Before the pandemic, the vast majority of businesses would work from a centralized office building. This would involve any employees registered at the company commuting into the office building and conducting their working day from this site.

With the rise of social distancing conditions, workers suddenly have to work from home, with this movement now carrying on into the current day. While working from home boosted company productivity by [an average of 13%](#), there were further negative effects from this movement. Most notably was the expansion of company attack surfaces, leading to hackers having more potential entry points into company databases.

A company attack surface is the total span of everything that's connected to a company. This could be something as large as the company's own website, or as small as an individual email account connected to an employee. No matter the size, each one of these points of connection within an attack surface represents a potential avenue of entry for a hacker.

The work from a home movement led to people around the globe having to rely on more technology during their working day, with everything from online meeting platforms to company accounts being multiplied as employees were assigned new profiles for almost everything.

As the number of different entry points for employees increased, with more and more tech tools being added to their stack, the possibility for hackers to target these accounts increased. Due to this, companies have become more vulnerable than ever before, with the need for complete attack surface monitoring leading to automatic machine defenses being the only available option.

Coinciding with the exposure of businesses through the creation of new accounts during the pandemic, the [total amount of devices](#) that are connected to the internet is equally increasing at a rapid rate. On a personal level, this leaves individuals more exposed than ever before, as a singular error in privacy configurations could lead to one of these platforms being exposed, with all the individual's information connected to that device or account being included in a potential breach.

Alongside the many effects of the pandemic that will last long into the future, the drastic impact on the cybersecurity industry is certainly influential.

HEADLINE	08/15 Callback phishing attacks massive growth
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/callback-phishing-attacks-see-massive-625-percent-growth-since-q1-2021/
GIST	<p>Hackers are increasingly moving towards hybrid forms of phishing attacks that combine email and voice social engineering calls as a way to breach corporate networks for ransomware and data extortion attacks.</p> <p>According to Agari's Q2 2022 cyber-intelligence report, phishing volumes have only increased by 6% compared to Q1 2022. However, the use of 'hybrid vishing' is seeing a massive 625% growth.</p> <p>Its hybrid form, called "callback phishing," also includes an email before the call, typically presenting the victim with a fake subscription/invoice notice.</p> <p>The recipient is advised to call on the provided phone number to resolve any issues with the charge, but instead of a real customer support agent, the call is answered by phishing actors.</p> <p>The scammers then offer to resolve the presented problem by tricking the victim into disclosing sensitive information or installing remote desktop tools on their system. The threat actors then connect to the victim's device remotely to install further backdoors or spread to other machines.</p> <p>These callback phishing attacks were first introduced by the 'BazarCall/BazaCall' campaigns that appeared in March 2021 to gain initial access to corporate networks for ransomware attacks.</p> <p>The attacks work so well that multiple ransomware and extortion gangs, such as Quantum, Zeon, and Silent Ransom Group, have adopted the same technique today to gain initial network access through an unsuspecting employee.</p> <p>"Hybrid Vishing attacks reached a six-quarter high in Q2, increasing 625% from Q1 2021. This threat type also contributed to 24.6% of the overall share of Response-Based threats," details the Agari report.</p> <p>"While this is the second quarter hybrid vishing attacks have declined in share due to the overall increase of response-based threats, vishing volume has steadily increased in count over the course of the year."</p> <p>Emotet surged and then died again</p> <p>The Emotet botnet has a habit of surging and then taking long vacations, which is what we are observing now with the malware.</p> <p>According to Agaari, the Emotet botnet saw a significant surge in Q2, replacing QBot in phishing campaigns. The two collectively accounted for 90.2% of all malware in user inboxes.</p> <p>The return of Emotet was attributed to the Conti crime syndicate, who convinced the original developer to relaunch operations. However, since the Conti ransomware brand shut down operations in June 2022, the Emotet malware has again ceased email campaigns.</p> <p>Other notable trends</p> <p>Another trend in phishing tactics recorded by Agari this quarter was the increased targeting of telecommunication service providers that chip away at attacks targeting financial organizations, which remain the top most targeted sector.</p> <p>It is also important to highlight that the detection evading tactic of using compromised sites for distributing phishing messages still finds fertile ground, with the analysts observing a growth of 6.7% compared to last quarter.</p> <p>Finally, when it comes to top-level domain abuse, ".com" remains the most popular choice, with almost half of all phishing emails originating from it and the ".cv" TLD appearing directly in 2nd place of the top ten for the first time, with a share of 8.8%.</p>

	As discussed in a late last year report by Palo Alto Networks, phishing actors use domains from small island countries, in this case, Cape Verde, due to their lax anti-abuse regulations that help them generate national income.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/15 Russian hackers continue to target Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/russian-hackers-target-ukraine-with-default-word-template-hijacker/
GIST	<p>Threat analysts monitoring cyberattacks on Ukraine report that the operations of the notorious Russian state-backed hacking group 'Gamaredon' continue to heavily target the war-torn country.</p> <p>Gamaredon (aka Armageddon or Shuckworm) is a group of Russian hackers believed to be part of the 18th Center of Information Security of the FSB, Russia's Federal Security Service.</p> <p>The particular threat group has been targeting Ukraine since 2014 and is considered responsible for several thousands of attacks against key public and private entities in the country.</p> <p>Its activity against Ukrainian targets has shifted up a gear since the Russian invasion in February 2022, involving phishing attacks and the deployment of novel malware variants.</p> <p>Persistent, long-term operations</p> <p>According to a report published today by Symantec, a division of Broadcom Software, Gamaredon's activity continues unabated in the sixth month of the war, with the most recent wave of attacks spanning between July 15 and August 8, 2022.</p> <p>The most recent infection vector involves phishing messages carrying a self-extracting 7-Zip archive that fetches an XML file from an "xsph.ru" subdomain associated with Gamaredon since May 2022.</p> <p>The XML file leads to the execution of a PowerShell info-stealer, of which Symantec spotted several slightly modified variants, most likely an attempt to evade detection.</p> <p>Additionally, the Russian hackers used VBS downloaders to fetch the Pterodo backdoor, one of Gamaredon's trademark tools, and in some cases, the Giddome backdoor.</p> <p>These backdoors allow the adversaries to record audio using the host's microphone, snap screenshots from the desktop, log and exfiltrate keystrokes, or download and execute additional ".exe" and ".dll" payloads.</p> <p>Finally, in the recent campaign, the hackers were observed deploying the legitimate remote desktop protocol tools 'Ammyy Admin' and 'AnyDesk.'</p> <p>None of these tactics are new, highlighting Gamaredon's lack of sophistication that the threat group makes up for with persistence and continual targeting.</p> <p>Compromised systems as infection points</p> <p>Ukraine's computer emergency response team (CERT-UA) also reported on recent Gamaredon activity last week after spotting a new phishing campaign relying on HTM attachments sent from compromised email accounts.</p> <p>CERT-UA's observations of the infection chain also report on PowerShell info-stealers that attempt to snatch data stored on web browsers.</p> <p>An interesting tactic spotted by Ukraine's cybersecurity agency is Gamaredon's attempted modification of the "Normal.dotm" file on the host, using a specially crafted macro.</p>

	<p>This file is the default Microsoft Word template, so modifying it has the potential to lace all documents created on the compromised machine with malicious code.</p> <p>By doing so, Gamaredon uses victims as new sources of infection and high-quality ones, too, as unaware recipients are more likely to open the laced documents from senders they trust.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Hackers attack UK water supplier
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hackers-attack-uk-water-supplier-with-16-million-customers/
GIST	<p>South Staffordshire Water, a company supplying 330 million liters of drinking water to 1.6 consumers daily, has issued a statement confirming IT disruption from a cyberattack.</p> <p>As the announcement explains, the safety and water distribution systems are still operational, so the disruption of the IT systems doesn't impact the supply of safe water to its customers or those of its subsidiaries, Cambridge Water and South Staffs Water.</p> <p>"This is thanks to the robust systems and controls over water supply and quality we have in place at all times, as well as the quick work of our teams to respond to this incident and implement the additional measures we have put in place on a precautionary basis," explains the statement published on the company's site.</p> <p>Also, South Staffordshire Water reassures its customers that all service teams are operating as usual, so there's no risk of extended outages due to the cyberattack.</p> <p>Clop misidentifies victim?</p> <p>Meanwhile, the Clop ransomware gang claimed Thames Water as their victim via an announcement on their onion site today, alleging to have accessed SCADA systems they could manipulate to cause harm to 15 million customers.</p> <p>Thames Water is UK's largest water supplier and wastewater treatment provider, serving Greater London and areas surrounding river Thames.</p> <p>The hackers allege to have informed Thames Water of its network security inadequacies and claim that they acted responsibly by not encrypting their data and only exfiltrating 5TB from the compromised systems.</p> <p>However, following a supposed collapse in the negotiations of the ransom payment, the actors published the first sample of stolen data that includes passports, screenshots from water treatment SCADA systems, driver's licenses, and more.</p> <p>Thames Water has officially disputed these claims via a statement today, saying that reports of Clop having breached its network are faux and that its operations stay at full capacity.</p> <p>One key detail in the case is that among the published evidence, Clop presents a spreadsheet with usernames and passwords, which features South Staff Water and South Staffordshire email addresses.</p> <p>Additionally, BleepingComputer observed, one of the leaked documents sent to the targeted firm is explicitly addressed to South Staffordshire PLC.</p> <p>As such, it's very likely that Clop misidentified their victim or that they are attempting to extort a much larger company using false evidence.</p> <p>This attack comes during dire drought times for UK consumers, with eight areas in the country imposing water ration policies and hosepipe bans.</p>

	<p>Cybercriminals don't pick their targets randomly, as hitting water suppliers during harsh drought periods could apply insurmountable pressure to pay the demanded ransom.</p> <p>For this to happen, though, Clop has to redirect its threats to the correct entity, but considering the publicity the matter has taken, it's probably too late for that.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/15 Phishing scam targets healthcare providers
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/email-security/evernote-phishing-scam-targeting-healthcare-providers-to-harvest-credentials?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Healthcare provider organizations are being targeted with a phishing campaign that uses a secure message theme in an attempt to harvest credentials, according to a recent notice from the Department of Health and Human Services Cybersecurity Coordination Center alert.</p> <p>The malicious emails lure victims to a malicious Evernote website, which mimics a legitimate webpage. The ongoing malspam campaign uses a subject line that includes the targeted organization's name, the date, and "business review."</p> <p>The email contains a malicious link that, when clicked, sends the user to a page tailored to their organization. The webpage includes an HTML download, which is actually a malicious phishing Trojan containing a JavaScript that acts like a legitimate application to trick the user into inadvertently executing the payload onto the device.</p> <p>"Once installed, a Trojan can perform the action it was designed for — damaging, disrupting, stealing, or inflicting harm on your data or network," according to the alert. For the Evernote campaign, the Adobe- and Microsoft-themed page then attempts to harvest Outlook, IONOS, AOL, or other credentials."</p> <p>HC3 warned the campaign may have used business email compromises (BECs) of entities from the healthcare sector and other industries.</p> <p>Entities are being urged to update all operating systems and software applications to defend against vulnerability exploits, while bolstering password management policies to reflect best practice standards.</p> <p>Healthcare is highly vulnerable to phishing attacks due to its high employee turnover and influx of new employees who may not have the necessary cybersecurity training, according to a 2019 Journal of the American Medical Association report.</p> <p>Fortunately, the same JAMA study confirmed workforce training and education effectively reduce healthcare's cyber risk. Specifically, phishing simulation was proven to generate awareness and strengthen the effectiveness of phishing education when those simulated emails appear as legitimate phishing emails.</p> <p>When an employee opens the simulation, it provides "a real-time opportunity to provide short phishing education to the employee," according to the report. "Increasing campaigns were associated with decreased odds of clicking on a phishing email, suggesting a potential benefit of phishing simulation and awareness.</p> <p>"Employee awareness and training represent an important component of protection against phishing attacks," the researchers added. "It only takes one successful phishing email, sent to one user, to shut down a critical system, potentially disrupting care across an entire organization."</p> <p>The HC3 alert on the Evernote campaign contains post request domains, the names of the malicious file attachments, MD5 hashes included in the attachments, and malicious URLs. Entities should review the alert to effectively defend against the ongoing attacks.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/15 Spyware scandals ripping thru Europe
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/europe-spyware-scandals-greece/
GIST	<p>THE TEXT MESSAGE that dragged Thanasis Koukakis into what's being called Europe's Watergate scandal was so innocuous, he can barely remember receiving it. The Athens-based financial journalist received the note on his black iPhone 12 Pro on July 12 last year from a Greek number he didn't have saved. That wasn't unusual for Koukakis, who has spent the past three years investigating the changes the government has been making to financial crime regulation. He gets a lot of messages—both from numbers he's saved and those he hasn't. This one addressed him directly. "Thanasis," it read, "Do you know about this issue?" Koukakis clicked on the link that followed, which took him to a news story about a Greek banking scandal. He replied with a terse: "No."</p> <p>Koukakis, 44, did not think about the message until months later. In the days that followed, he was oblivious to the fact that the website that hosted the story he was sent had disappeared. He also did not know that by clicking on that link, he had opened an invisible door inside his phone, allowing spyware software called Predator to creep in to silently watch the messages and calls he was sending and receiving. His phone kept working as if everything was normal, he says. Then, in December, Koukakis read a report about how Facebook parent company Meta had detected commercial spyware being used by customers in 10 different countries, including Greece. One of the links used to trick people into downloading the spyware was designed to look like CNN Greece—where he worked as an editor.</p> <p>Suddenly suspicious, he contacted Meta, which connected him with researchers at Citizen Lab, a research facility at the University of Toronto that specializes in spyware. In March, they told him that he was being spied on. He went public with that information the following month, prompting uproar and an investigation by a Greek prosecutor. But the scandal was only getting started. On July 26, another person revealed he had also received a link infected with Predator spyware: Nikos Androulakis, leader of PASOK, Greece's third largest political party.</p> <p>Androulakis did not click on the infected link. But the fact someone had attempted to hack the phone of a serving opposition leader tipped the Greek government into crisis. Two officials have resigned so far and pressure is mounting on Prime Minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, to explain who's behind the spyware.</p> <p>The ripple effects of the scandal are reaching the heart of the European Union. Over the past 13 months, it has been revealed that spyware had targeted opposition leaders, journalists, lawyers and activists in France, Spain, Hungary, Poland and even staff within the European Commission, the EU's cabinet-style government, between 2019 and 2021. The bloc has already set up an inquiry into its own use of spyware, but even as the 38-person committee works toward producing a report for early 2023, the number of new scandals is quickly mounting up.</p> <p>What sets the scandal in Greece apart is the company behind the spyware that was used. Until then the surveillance software in every EU scandal could be traced back to one company, the notorious NSO Group. Yet the spyware stalking Koukakis' phone was made by Cytrox, a company founded in the small European nation of North Macedonia and acquired in 2017 by Tal Dilian—an entrepreneur who achieved notoriety for driving a high-tech surveillance van around the island of Cyprus and showing a Forbes journalist how it could hack into passing people's phones. In that interview, Dilian said he had acquired Cytrox and absorbed the company into his intelligence company Intellexa, which is now thought to now be based in Greece. The arrival of Cytrox into Europe's ongoing scandal shows the problem is bigger than just the NSO Group. The bloc has a thriving spyware industry of its own.</p> <p>As the NSO Group struggles with intense scrutiny and being blacklisted by the US, its less well-known European rivals are jostling to take its clients, researchers say. Over the past two months, Cytrox is not the only local company to generate headlines for hacking devices within the bloc.</p> <p>In June, Google discovered the Italian spyware vendor RCS Lab was targeting smartphones in Italy and Kazakhstan. Alberto Nobili, RCS' managing director, told WIRED that the company condemns the misuse of its products but declined to comment on whether the cases cited by Google were examples of misuse.</p>

“RCS personnel are not exposed, nor participate in any activities conducted by the relevant customers,” he says.

More recently, in July, spyware made by Austria’s DSIRF was detected by [Microsoft](#) hacking into law firms, banks, and consultancies in Austria, the UK, and Panama. DSIRF did not reply to WIRED’s request for comment.

“Europe is definitely a nexus,” says Justin Albrecht, security intelligence researcher at cybersecurity company Lookout. This jostling in the spyware industry echoes what happened in 2015, when the well-known Italian spyware maker Hacking Team was itself [hacked](#) and the company’s emails were leaked online, says Albrecht. “After that, we started to see different players take away some of the business that was going to Hacking Team.”

Commercial spyware companies are the hit men of their industry. They enable hacking to take place, but they don’t choose the target. Instead, who orders these infections remains a mystery. When researchers detect spyware on a person’s phone, they can tell which company created the product but not who paid for it, meaning it’s difficult to decipher who’s really to blame.

In Greece, for example, the conservative government continues to deny using Predator spyware against Koukakis and Androulakis, although the [head of Greek intelligence](#) reportedly admitted to legally wiretapping Koukakis’ phone using local telecoms companies while [the prime minister](#) said Androulakis had been put under the same type of surveillance. “What took place was not illegal but it was a mistake,” he said. Resignations there started with those admissions. First the head of Greek intelligence, Panagiotis Kontoleon, stepped down. He was shortly followed by Grigoris Dimitriadis, the prime minister’s chief of staff (and nephew), after local outlet [Reporters United](#) alleged Dimitriadis ran in the same circles as people selling Cytrox spyware. Neither the Prime Minister’s office nor the Greek intelligence agency replied to WIRED’s request for comment.

Last year in Hungary, six people discovered their phones had been hacked by NSO group’s Pegasus, after they were tipped off by the Pegasus Project, an investigation by 17 media outlets in different countries. There is no direct evidence the Hungarian government deployed this spyware against local journalists and activists, says Ádám Remport, legal officer for the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, which is representing hacking victims in a legal case against the state. Instead it’s a case of connecting the dots. “We know that Hungary bought Pegasus. We know these people were in fields that are uncomfortable for the government,” he says, adding the people targeted were journalists and activists who uncovered corruption and Hungary’s connections with Russia. “I think there are no other possible suspects who could have carried out these acts.”

Following revelations about the use of NSO spyware in Hungary and Poland, members of the European Parliament launched [a rare inquiry](#) in April, whose focus on Pegasus was so marked that it was called the PEGA committee.

Some in Israel believe the focus on the NSO Group is disproportionate. “There’s a feeling in Israel that a fair part of this is just Israel-bashing, and if it were any other country, there wouldn’t have been nearly as much noise about it,” says Chuck Freilich, a former deputy national security adviser in Israel. “There are companies and other countries that do the exact same or almost exact same thing. They just don’t do it as well.”

The NSO group doesn’t deserve less scrutiny, but other spyware companies do deserve more, says Lookout’s Albrecht. Although victims of other spyware firms are not as well known as Jamal Khashoggi, the *Washington Post* columnist who was murdered after his phone was hacked with Pegasus, there are signs that other companies enable hacking that would be considered controversial. “We’ve seen indications that RCS Lab spyware is being used within Syria, specifically in what’s known as the Rojava region, the area where the Kurdish minority population primarily is,” he says.

For some, the situation in Greece reinforces the argument that there needs to be industry-wide regulation.

“Even if NSO Group closes tomorrow because of all the problems they face today, the situation will be the same if there is no change in the regulation,” says Etienne Maynier, a technologist at Amnesty International’s Security Lab. “The problem is not one bad company. It’s really the legal structure that makes these companies take these decisions.”

Sophie in’t Veld, a Dutch MEP who is the rapporteur in charge of the PEGA committee, is hoping to change that once the EU inquiry is complete next year. “This whole sector should be heavily regulated,” she says, adding she wants to force the sector to be more transparent. “If you try to find out who these companies are, who the people are behind them, and where they are based, it’s impossible.”

What annoys her the most is that Intellexa—the company that sells Cytox—says on its website that it’s EU regulated. “What the hell does that mean that you are EU regulated?” she says. “Regulated by whom and by what rules?”

[Return to Top](#)

Terrorism, Extremism

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Arrests: 3 Israelis in ISIS attack plot
SOURCE	https://www.israeltoday.co.il/read/3-israelis-arrested-for-planning-to-carry-out-isis-attacks/
GIST	<p>(TPS) It was revealed by Israeli security services that in July the General Security Service (Israel’s equivalent of the FBI, known locally as the <i>Shin Bet</i>) uncovered and thwarted a terrorist group operated inside of Israel by the Islamic State international terrorist organization (ISIS). In a combined operation of the General Security Service and the Israel Police of the Carmel Area Crime Squad in the north of the country, two residents of the Israeli northern Arab town of Umm al-Fahm were arrested by the Shin Bet on suspicion of intending to carry out terrorist activities on behalf of ISIS.</p> <p>A resident of the Rafaieh Bedouin settlement in the Negev was also arrested for similar offenses.</p> <p>So, in addition to dealing with internal terrorist groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad, Israel must also deal with threats posed by an international group like Islamic State. While there is already international terrorism plotted and directed against Israel through the support of the Iranian government, Islamic State is no friend of Iran, a Shia Muslim nation. The organization represents Sunni Muslims and attacks Shia Muslims, whom it feels are heretics.</p> <p>This news was revealed just after a joint operation conducted by the IDF and other security services Sunday night captured 19 suspected terrorists. A 20th suspect was shot and killed by police after he attacked them with a knife when they attempted to arrest the suspect.</p> <p>The arrested suspects from the north were identified as 21-year-old Muhammad Farouk Yosef Agbaria, and 21-year-old Abdel Mahdi Masoud Muhammad Jabarin. Jabarin was already known to security forces for his previous activity on behalf of Islamic State in which he planned a terrorist attack inside of Israel.</p> <p>Authorities revealed that the 2 arrested had been under close surveillance by the security forces, given that they are identified with an extreme Salafi-Jihadist ideology.</p> <p>On August 15, an indictment was filed against the two for committing security offenses.</p> <p>Authorities stated that the investigation of the 2 by the General Security Service uncovered their plan to go to what is described as an Islamic State combat zone abroad with the aim of joining the ranks of the terrorist organization and fighting for it. To that end, they attempted to acquire Israeli passports and consulted with an Israeli citizen, another resident of Umm al-Fahm, who recently returned from an Al-Qaeda combat zone in Africa.</p>

Return to Top	<p>The investigation also revealed that Abdel Mahdi contacted a local official in Nigeria in order to get directions to the district where intensive fighting by Islamic State is currently going on. It also emerged that as part of the preparations for their departure to fight in the organization's ranks, the two also had ISIS materials with information about weapons and pictures of those killed in combat and beheadings. It was also uncovered that they held physical training and shooting ranges as part of their training and preparation for fighting in the ranks of the terrorist organization.</p> <p>The security services stated that this investigation came in addition to other recent investigations that were conducted to thwart activities conducted on behalf of Islamic State in Israel, which holds the extreme Salafi-Jihadist ideology.</p> <p>A resident of the Rafaieh Bedouin settlement in the Negev was also arrested.</p> <p>The suspected terrorists were apprehended in a combined operation of the General Security Service and the Israel Police of the Carmel Area Crime Squad in the north of the country.</p> <p>On July 22, the General Security Service, in cooperation with the Israel Police/the Negev Special Police Department, arrested Muhammad Al-Rafaieh, an Israeli citizen aged about 30, a resident of the Rafiae Diaspora in the Negev, on suspicion of committing security offenses inspired by the terrorist organization the Islamic State (ISIS).</p> <p>Al-Rafaieh admitted that he identified with Islamic State and supported the organization's ideas and goals. He even admitted to carrying out weapons training together with others in order to join the organization and fight in its ranks in Israel when "the time came."</p> <p>An indictment was filed against Al-Rafaieh by the Southern District Attorney's Office.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/16 Terror magazines exploit sarcastic humor
SOURCE	https://english.alarabiya.net/variety/2022/08/16/Rottenyahu-Terrorist-propaganda-magazines-using-humor-in-harmful-messaging
GIST	<p>Humor is being used in terrorist propaganda magazines to reinforce identity and promote group bonding, new research suggests.</p> <p>The study found that different terrorist groups use varying comedic tactics, while using "humor" to label global presidents; including "the Senile Crusader" to describe US President Joe Biden, and "Rottenyahu" to depict former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.</p> <p>The study, conducted by the United Kingdom's University of Exeter, found that the Taliban, al-Qaeda and Tahrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) were mainly using humor in a similar way, using situational comedy, while humor in ISIS magazines was dehumanizing and mocking.</p> <p>Around 82 terrorist magazines (published in English) were examined and the research team found that al-Qaeda and the Taliban in particular used parody and mockery to sway the curious and send their message by emphasizing an "us versus them" mentality.</p> <p>This usually involves using aggressive imagery of people and countries to portray them as animals.</p> <p>Published in the journal Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression, the study was carried out by Dr. Weeda Mehran from the University of Exeter and her MA students Megan Byrne, Ella Gibbs-Pearce, Archie Macfarlane, Jacob Minihane and Amy Ranger.</p> <p>"[Terrorist] media strategy uses situational humor to create solidarity – these are in-jokes often only understood by those who understand the jihadi ideology and political outlook so it helps create a shared</p>

identity,” Mehran said in a statement released by the university. “Shared humor creates an environment that fosters internal cohesion and creates social bonding.”

The extremist groups repeatedly used the term “dog” to describe President George W. Bush, “donkey” to describe Americans in general and wild animals to describe US troops.

The researchers also found that ISIS often labels US President Joe Biden as “the Senile Crusader” and al-Qaeda refers to former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as “Rottenyahu.”

They also found that the TTP was more likely to resort to sarcastic and ironic humor than ISIS, the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

In addition, al-Qaeda was the least likely extremist group to use sarcastic humor.

“Propaganda is used to encourage [terrorism] but it serves a much bigger purpose and humor is a key part. We found the use of three different types of humor – de-humanizing, sarcastic/and situational,” said Mehran.

“ISIS was more likely to use dehumanizing humor – portraying rivals as robots or animals and mocking them. This sets them apart from other groups who are more likely to use sarcasm and irony.”

The study determined that the regularity of dehumanizing humor used in ISIS’s magazine reflected their overall uncompromising and aggressive stance towards its opponents and outsiders.

“Situational humor is used strategically to enrich narratives of past events and develop a religious rationale for conducting jihad, as well as motivating individuals to carry out their operations. This humor emphasizes the comradery and brotherhood of carrying out ‘istishhadi’ [martyr] missions and depicts perilous and dangerous operations and efforts as peaceful, even joyful.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/15 Drones attack US-led coalition Syria base
SOURCE	https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2022/08/15/Drones-attack-Syrian-base-of-US-led-coalition-no-injuries-recorded
GIST	<p>Drones attacked a Syrian outpost of the US-led anti-extremist coalition on Monday but there were no injuries, the coalition said.</p> <p>Coalition forces “responded to an attack by multiple unmanned aerial systems in the vicinity of al-Tanf Garrison at approximately 6:30 am (0330 GMT),” a coalition statement said.</p> <p>They intercepted one drone while another exploded without causing injuries or damage within a compound of Maghawir al-Thawra, a rebel group supported by Washington, the statement said.</p> <p>Other attempted strikes “were not successful,” it added, without specifying who it suspected of carrying out the attack.</p> <p>Iran-backed forces are deployed in close proximity to al-Tanf, a desert garrison in southern Syria, on the strategically important Baghdad-Damascus highway, near the Syrian border with Iraq and Jordan.</p> <p>The coalition has disrupted several similar attacks in the past, including against the al-Tanf outpost established in 2016.</p> <p>Hundreds of American troops are deployed in Syria’s northeast as part of the coalition focused on fighting remnants of ISIS.</p>

	<p>The extremists conquered swathes of Iraq and Syria, declaring their “caliphate” in 2014. Five years later they lost their last scrap of territory to local coalition-backed forces in Syria.</p> <p>In December last year, the Pentagon said a British fighter jet shot down a drone that threatened al-Tanf.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 GSIM claims killing Wagner mercenaries
SOURCE	https://english.alarabiya.net/News/world/2022/08/16/Extremist-group-claims-to-have-killed-four-Wagner-mercenaries-in-central-Mali
GIST	<p>An al-Qaeda-affiliated extremist group claimed to have killed four mercenaries from the Russian private security group Wagner in an ambush in central Mali, the SITE Intelligence monitoring group said Monday.</p> <p>The Support Group for Islam and Muslims (GSIM), the main extremist alliance in the Sahel, said it ambushed a group of Wagner soldiers on Saturday as they rode motorcycles in the Bandiagara region from the village of Djallo toward the mountains, according to a statement by its propaganda arm authenticated by SITE.</p> <p>Its fighters killed four of the group while the rest fled, the statement said.</p> <p>Two local elected officials confirmed the incident to AFP, while a senior Malian army official refused to confirm or deny it.</p> <p>“Four Russians were killed over the weekend by [extremists] near Bandiagara,” one of the local officials, who requested anonymity, told AFP.</p> <p>A hospital source in the region also confirmed the “death in combat of four Russians,” adding that one had “passed through Mopti hospital.”</p> <p>Russia has become a close ally of Mali’s ruling junta in its fight against a long-running extremist insurgency.</p> <p>The regime has brought in Russian paramilitary fighters - described by Bamako as military instructors but by Western nations as mercenaries - to support the beleaguered armed forces.</p> <p>Their deployment was a key factor in prompting France, Mali’s former colonial power and traditional ally, to pull its military forces out of the country.</p> <p>The GSIM, whose influence on the ground continues to expand, includes myriad extremist groups and operates mainly in Mali and neighboring Burkina Faso.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Taliban plagued by internal factions
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/jgp5kk/taliban-afghanistan-factions
GIST	<p>A year after they toppled the US-backed Afghan government and promised a unified, rock-solid leadership, the upper echelons of the Taliban are riven with internal disputes as powerful factions squabble in a quest for dominance.</p> <p>The Islamist group gave the impression of being a cohesive military and political unit as it completed the lightning-fast takeover of Afghanistan that stunned the world last August, ending a 20-year period of Western-backed governments post-9/11.</p> <p>But the Taliban is actually made up of a series of factions, ranging from the – in Taliban terms at least – relatively pragmatic clergymen in Qatar to the extremist Haqqani Network, whose leaders are still among</p>

the world's most-wanted terrorists despite now being Afghan government ministers. Senior figures from the Pashtun tribes from southern Afghanistan also make up a large chunk of Taliban leadership.

This factionalism has led to an inability to make basic decisions and enforce rules in areas of everyday life. The area where it's most apparent? Whether girls should be allowed to go to school.

In March this year, girls in Kabul aged 11-18 eagerly packed their backpacks and put on their uniforms, ready to resume learning after being banned for six months. The Taliban's Education Ministry said they could go back before the start of the new academic year. But just hours after the schools were open, all girls were sent home, with another announcement overruling the initial decision from the same ministry, citing an edict from the group's central leadership that said the girls should not be at school. The fresh decree was issued because the girls' uniforms were apparently not modest enough, despite including a head covering. The Taliban says it is still working on a plan "in accordance with Islamic and Afghan cultural values."

A mother and father of three girls told VICE World News from Kabul that "it might be too late" for the Taliban to let girls attend high school classrooms again.

"We've been waiting for a long time for good news, and so have our daughters, but what we hear is only rumours, and there isn't much that we can do about it," the mother said, speaking anonymously for security reasons.

The girls are still languishing at home.

"People need a clear idea of what will happen, but what we've heard so far from the Taliban people is to wait, and that everything is under control and in order," said the father, who also asked to hide the identity of his family for fear of reprisals.

The school fiasco is just one example of a series of confusing edicts and institutional dysfunction. Universities were allowed to take female students in gender-segregated classes, but the decision put the Taliban leaders in Kabul against the more conservative figures from Pashtun tribes from Kandahar, a stronghold and unofficial capital of the Islamist group.

Vague announcements by the group on dress codes have also caused confusion, as the feared Ministry for Virtue and the Prevention of Vice recommended in May that women should be covered from head to toe, initially not enforcing it but later bringing in punishments for women who broke the rule. The group's top leaders have openly said women should stay home, while others boasted about allowing some Afghan women to continue their work, primarily in the healthcare sector and a handful in the security forces.

As the Taliban factions bicker over what an Islamic government should look like, the country is enduring an economic meltdown, with millions of Afghans plunged into poverty and a dire humanitarian crisis unfolding.

Some Taliban leaders – notably those from the Qatar-based delegation – have tried to project a different, friendlier image of their organisation to encourage other countries to cooperate with Afghanistan. But the group's dismal record on human rights, in particular women's rights, means it's still estranged from the rest of the world.

The organisation is now split among regional groups that gained power in different provinces. When the Islamists took over Kabul a year ago, the new government was made up of senior figures and commanders from different groups within the Taliban, each with their own vision for the future of the country.

The Taliban's most senior figures are drawn from the Haqqanis – a group notorious for suicide bombing and kidnappings – as well as the Qatar-based leadership, who led the withdrawal negotiations with former US president Donald Trump's administration, putting a friendly face on the supposedly amended Taliban and distancing the organisation from its brutal rule in the 1990s. The other part of the movement's top

brass is made up of men mainly from the factions based in Kandahar represented by the senior religious figures from the southern Pashtun tribes. Some other senior posts are also filled by leaders from a smaller and less powerful faction of ethnic Tajik and Uzbek commanders, who are based mostly in the north of the country.

Ibraheem Bahiss, an analyst with Crisis Group's Asia Program, described unity as one of the major focuses of the current Taliban leadership. "Taliban leadership seems divided between those that seek a return to the 1990s and those that want to tread a different path," he told VICE World News.

The eleventh-hour rule-change on girls' schools was because "the Taliban as a group hadn't achieved an internal consensus on the issue, and they found it easy to default to the non-reopening of schools until they reach consensus," Bahiss said.

He added: "They are trying to build consensus on issues that they never really thought about in the past 20 years in a way that won't antagonise its own important commanders in case these guys rebel against their government. This has been another key challenge for the Taliban, and one that they haven't overcome yet as far as we can tell."

The Taliban was founded by Mullah Omar, a notoriously ferocious fighter who lost an eye during the Soviet-Afghan War. The Taliban was born out of the embers of a brutal civil war in the aftermath of the Soviet occupation, with Western-backed militants who fought in the conflict against the USSR forming groups based on tribal and ideological allegiances. These groups fought over the spoils of power, and the Taliban eventually came out on top during the civil war. They took over Afghanistan in 1996.

The movement led by Mullah Omar marked its reign with terror. His government closed down schools for girls, banned music, and forced women to stay indoors. Taliban soldiers were notorious for beating people up if they found people failing to follow the Islamist's rules, such as unaccompanied women walking on the street or men failing to attend prayers five times a day.

After the 9/11 attacks, a US-led military invasion toppled the Taliban in a bid to dismantle al Qaeda and deny the group a base of operations in the country. Together with Afghan groups spearheaded by the Northern Alliance, the Western coalition brought in a new era, with a Western-backed government in Kabul. However, this, too, was tainted by corruption and factionalism, with warlords competing to snatch lucrative government and military contracts, making the country one of the most corrupt in the world.

After 2001, the Taliban was forced to withdraw to rural areas of Afghanistan and into neighbouring countries, particularly Pakistan, where they ran a two-decade insurgency until resuming power over Kabul once again.

In the 20 years since the US-led invasion, successive Afghan governments have been notable for little except endemic corruption. One of the only policy successes that came out of the invasion has been the number of girls getting an education, which grew from almost zero to 2.5 million in those two decades.

The final decision is yet to be made by the Taliban on the issue of secondary schools for girls, but it would need the group to overcome opposition within its own ranks before causing any serious split in the well-knitted alliance. Despite the assurance given by a number of the Taliban's top leaders on the issue, multiple reports suggest that the acting prime minister, Hibatullah Akhundzada, is strongly opposed to girls being educated.

"For the Taliban, retaining its own coherence and preventing fragmentation of its movement seems paramount," Bahiss said. "Even if it comes at the cost of depriving millions of girls from secondary education."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Al Qaeda, Islamic State rise in Africa
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/16/africa-mali-france-al-qaeda-isis-insurgents/

As the world remembered the chaos and tragedy that surrounded the U.S. and allied withdrawal from Afghanistan a year ago, a quieter exit took place Monday. The [last French troops left Mali](#) for neighboring Niger, drawing to a formal close a near-decade-long mission in the sprawling West African nation of 21 million people. Their presence in Mali had begun in 2013 as part of an ambitious Paris-led effort to [fight back an Islamist militant threat](#) that was spreading across the vast region between desert and savanna known as the Sahel.

But the mission ended incomplete despite billions of euros spent and thousands of Malian lives lost (as well as 59 French soldiers), leaving in its wake no shortage of geopolitical rancor and a worryingly deteriorating security situation. Militants from factions linked to both al-Qaeda and the Islamic State have entrenched themselves on a widening battlefield across the African continent.

The French departure from Mali had been [telegraphed months in advance](#) amid a rupture in relations between the government of French President Emmanuel Macron and a Malian junta that seized power in August 2020 and carried out “[a coup within a coup](#)” — as Macron himself put it — against civilian officials nine months later. Those overthrows were part of what U.N. Secretary General António Guterres lamented was “[an epidemic of coups d’états](#)” in the region including in neighboring Burkina Faso and Guinea.

In Mali — not unlike what happened once the United States announced its drawdown in Afghanistan — attacks by Islamist insurgents have spiked in recent weeks as the French completed their exit. “The situation is worse than in 2013,” said Alpha Alhadi Koina, a Bamako-based geopolitical analyst, [to the New York Times](#). “The cancer has spread through Mali.”

The scale of the violence shows how the central zone of Islamist-related violence has shifted away from the Middle East and South Asia. “In Mali nearly 2,700 people were killed in conflict in the first six months of this year, almost 40 percent more than in all of 2021,” [the Economist detailed last week](#). “Last month jihadists attacked a military checkpoint 60km from Bamako, the capital; a week later they hit the country’s main military camp on its doorstep. In Niger, deaths in conflict have fallen slightly but will probably exceed 1,000 in 2022. In Burkina Faso in the first half of the year about 2,100 people have been killed.”

An Islamic State offshoot has supplanted fundamentalist Islamist group Boko Haram in northern Nigeria. Further afield, Islamic State-affiliated militants are waging attacks across a swath of central and East Africa, from northern Mozambique to Uganda to the Democratic Republic of Congo. In Somalia, al-Shabab, an insurgent faction originally linked to al-Qaeda that is arguably more capable than its much-diminished parent organization, remains a powerful force — and a threat with such menace that it prompted President Biden to [redeploy U.S. forces to the country](#) earlier this year.

Last week, Martin Ewi, a South Africa-based analyst, briefed the U.N. Security Council on the scale of the threat, pointing to how the Islamic State was active in more than 20 African countries already, and warned that the continent may represent “the future of the caliphate.”

The Islamic State’s first supposed “caliphate” took root in Iraq and Syria amid the chaos of the latter’s civil war. But a coalition of Western and local forces eventually smashed its forces, recaptured the cities it once controlled and forced its surviving fighters into captivity or hiding. Ewi told the assembled U.N. dignitaries that “no similar coalition was mounted to defeat [the Islamic State] in Africa ... meaning that the continent was left to bear the consequences of those who are fleeing Syria and finding safe havens on the continent.”

France’s exit from Mali, though, underscores both how fraught the prevailing security situation is and how difficult it may be to address. After being initially welcomed when huge stretches of Mali were under Islamist militant control, France’s presence turned unpopular over time, with incidents like a [French airstrike last year](#) in central Mali that killed 19 civilians souring attitudes against the old colonial ruler.

	<p>“French forces eliminated a significant number of jihadist fighters and leaders, operating under incredibly difficult circumstances and at high risk,” Andrew Lebovich, a policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations and an expert on the Sahel, told me. “At the same time, the French were ultimately not able to manage tensions with successive Malian governments.”</p> <p>The current junta in Mali appears to be seeking to replace France’s help by enlisting mercenaries from notorious Russian firm Wagner Group — charges Mali’s government denies. Forces linked to that organization, along with Malian troops, are believed to have carried out mass extrajudicial executions in a central Malian town in March. The political environment in Mali with the junta is so troubling that it compelled Germany to suspend its comparatively smaller role in supporting a U.N. mission in the country.</p> <p>“The disruption of much of the security cooperation with French and partner forces has almost certainly contributed to the deterioration of the security situation, while the arrival of Wagner forces has contributed to a number of significant human rights abuses, while doing little to visibly improve security in the areas in which they most frequently operate,” Lebovich said.</p> <p>In recent years, he added, “the most active components” of both al-Qaeda and the Islamic State “have been in Africa, particularly in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin,” and remain deeply difficult to dislodge.</p> <p>“Even where some regional interventions have been moderately more successful, these groups continue to operate and not only retain a strong presence, but in some cases expand their operations across quite vast spaces,” Lebovich said.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/15 US signals greater involvement in Somalia?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/15/us-airstrike-somalia-kills-13-al-shabab-terrorists/
GIST	<p>A U.S. airstrike killed more than a dozen al-Shabab militants on Sunday in the latest military action targeting the al Qaeda-linked terror group that has been fighting for more than a decade to topple Somalia’s Western-backed government.</p> <p>Authorities said 14 al-Shabab fighters were killed, according to a report Monday by Voice of America, which cited Somali military officials as saying the U.S. military conducted the strike to support Somali troops battling the terror group.</p> <p>Somali troops were reportedly able to capture al-Shabab’s primary stronghold in the nation’s Hiran region and destroy local hideouts following the strike, which U.S. officials on Monday had not officially confirmed.</p> <p>The Pentagon’s Africa Command said in a statement last week that American forces had launched three airstrikes on Aug. 9, targeting al-Shabab fighters who had attacked Somali National Army Forces. The statement said an initial assessment found four militants had been killed in the Aug. 9 strikes.</p> <p>“U.S. forces are authorized to conduct strikes in defense of designated partner forces,” Africa Command officials said.</p> <p>Somalia is situated in the Horn of Africa, but al-Shabab is believed to have designs on other countries in the region in order to advance its own rule based on a strict interpretation of Islamic law.</p> <p>On Aug. 6, the group launched a rare cross-border attack into neighboring Ethiopia but was thwarted by security forces.</p> <p>“With more than 800 killed and 100 captured, Al-Shabab’s misadventure into Ethiopia ended with a rout of the terrorists,” Mustafe M. Omer, president of the Somali region of Ethiopia, said on Twitter after the skirmish. “The task of ensuring [al-Shabab] never dares to get close to the border is underway.”</p>

“A united people and functioning state can never be intimidated by ragtag outfits like Al-Shabab,” Mr. Omer wrote.

U.S. Africa Command officials, meanwhile, say “great measures” are taken to prevent civilian casualties from being caused by American strikes against the al-Shabab, which has been listed by the State Department as a “Foreign Terrorist Organization” since 2008.

The U.S. efforts “contrast with the indiscriminate attacks that Al-Shabab regularly conducts against the civilian population,” according to the Africa Command statement circulated last week.

“The Federal Government of Somalia and the U.S. remain committed to fighting Al-Shabab to prevent the deaths of innocent civilians,” the statement said. “Violent extremist organizations like Al-Shabab present long-term threats to Somali, regional, and U.S. interests.”

The recent U.S. airstrikes follow President Biden’s decision in May to deploy several hundred U.S. Special Forces to Somalia, escalating a long-term counterterrorism mission there that former President Donald Trump had sought to wind down.

The strikes also follow the election in May of Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as Somalia’s new president. He has pledged to continue the fight against al-Shabab’s influence in the country.

On Aug. 7, a senior Biden administration official said the White House recognizes that political inclusion and economic opportunity are crucial means to address violent extremism in the region. However, “we will still use military force in a calibrated and discreet way in certain crises and challenges that affect and threaten U.S. interests and the U.S. homeland,” the official said.

Sunday’s strikes came days after Marine Gen. Michael Langley assumed command of U.S. Africa Command. He is the first African American to be promoted to four-star general in the Marine Corps.

Daniel Furnad, associate director of the Nairobi-based Farsight Africa Group, said the timing of the airstrike might not be a mere coincidence. “U.S. policy has been undergoing an overhaul [and] with General Langley now in place, I think we are starting to see that policy unfold,” Mr. Furnad said, according to Voice of America.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/15 Border: 10 more terror suspects nabbed
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/15/agents-nab-10-more-terrorism-suspects-southern-bor/
GIST	<p>Border Patrol agents caught 10 more terrorism suspects at the U.S.-Mexico boundary in July, according to new numbers released by Homeland Security on Monday.</p> <p>Fentanyl seizures at the southern border also hit an all-time high, suggesting the overall flow of the deadly drug is skyrocketing.</p> <p>Customs and Border Protection reported catching 2,072 pounds of fentanyl at the border, up from 640 pounds in June, and obliterating the previous record set in April of 1,281 pounds.</p> <p>Officials believe that seizures are a yardstick of overall flow, so the more seized, the more is likely getting through.</p> <p>Illegal immigration at the southern border, as measured by arrests and encounters, did dip for a second straight month, with just fewer than 200,000 people crossing the border illegally caught by CBP agents and officers.</p> <p>CBP Commissioner Chris Magnus took credit, saying it appears the administration’s effort to discourage new migrants is working.</p>

“This marks the second month in a row of decreased encounters along the Southwest border. While the encounter numbers remain high, this is a positive trend and the first two-month drop since October 2021,” he said.

He pointed to an ad campaign this spring warning would-be migrants of the dangers of the journey as a factor in cutting the flow of people.

But his own numbers suggested things aren’t so rosy.

The number of “unique individuals” — those who haven’t tried to cross in the previous year — actually rose 1% in July, compared to June.

CBP often touts the unique individual number as a better sense of what’s happening at the border, given the high rate of recidivism due to the Title 42 pandemic border closure policy.

The terrorism numbers also remained worryingly high.

The numbers are derived from Border Patrol arrests of people whose names pop in the Terrorist Screening Database.

Agents at the southern border now have apprehended a total of 66 people listed in the database so far this fiscal year, which dates back to Oct. 1. A month ago, that figure stood at just 56, showing that 10 more were caught in July alone.

By contrast, in all of 2021, just 15 people listed in the terrorism database were caught. And in the four years before then, just 11 total people on the list were caught at the southern border.

Biden administration officials last year downplayed claims that terrorism suspects were using the southern border to get into the country.

But under pressure from Republicans in Congress, the administration began to release the numbers publicly, and they back up GOP claims.

Rodney Scott, former chief of the Border Patrol, told The Washington Times earlier this summer that the terrorism numbers are “beyond red flairs, those are rocket flashes going on” to warn about the danger at the border.

He said the most worrying aspect is that the people who are caught are likely only a subset of those coming. They’re probably people who didn’t know they were on the watchlist.

“Anybody who actually knows or has a fear they’re on the watch list, they’re coming through those gaps and holes,” Mr. Scott said.

July’s border numbers did contain some clear positive trends.

The number of migrant children caught while crossing the border illegally without parents — perhaps the most vulnerable population at the border — dropped from 15,255 to 13,299.

Migrants traveling as families, meanwhile, remained about static, at about 52,000 people in July.

On the drug front, seizures can vary dramatically month-to-month.

Cocaine seizures were down 56% in July, while methamphetamine and heroin seizures were up 15% and 8% respectively.

But the fentanyl numbers were eye-popping, tripling June’s total.

	<p>Both CBP's Office of Field Operations, which mans the official border crossings, and the Border Patrol, which covers the areas between the ports, saw record numbers in June.</p> <p>The trafficking is heavily concentrated in California and Arizona.</p> <p>The Washington Times has reached out to CBP for comment.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/15 France quits Mali: 9yrs, \$billions, lives lost
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/15/world/africa/mali-france-military-operation.html
GIST	<p>It began with fanfare and friendship: Arriving in the West African nation of Mali in 2013, French troops were greeted as heroes liberating Malians from an existential jihadist threat.</p> <p>But it ended quietly on Monday afternoon, the last few French units rolling over the border into neighboring Niger, absent a cordial farewell from their Malian partners, with whom France has had a major falling-out, and their mission far from accomplished.</p> <p>The last unit of the French military mission, Operation Barkhane, crossed the border at 1 p.m., the military said in a statement, adding that the mission was undergoing a "deep transformation" but would "continue to fight terrorism" in the region.</p> <p>French troops have been fighting Islamists in Mali for nearly a decade. Billions of euros have been spent. Thousands of civilians have died, as well as thousands of Malian soldiers and 59 French ones. But far from being stopped, the insurgency has billowed out from its northern beginnings across the country's center and to its neighbors.</p> <p>"The situation is worse than in 2013," said Alpha Alhadi Koina, a Bamako-based geopolitical analyst at the research institute Think Peace Sahel. "The cancer has spread through Mali."</p> <p>Despite France's regular announcements of jihadist leaders it has killed, armed Islamist groups continue to attract young men to their ranks, often finding fertile recruitment ground among marginalized communities with grievances against the state.</p> <p>In the wider Sahel region, the vast strip south of the Sahara, more than 2.5 million people have been displaced in the last decade, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Just in the first six months of this year, more than 2,000 civilians have been killed, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, a nonprofit.</p> <p>In 2020, Malians' anger at their own government for failing to stop the violence bubbled over, and the country experienced some of its biggest demonstrations in years. At the height of the protests, Malian soldiers staged a coup d'état, arresting the president, Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, and forcing him to resign.</p> <p>Since taking power, the military junta has enjoyed a wave of popularity and the French, seen as complicit with Mr. Keïta's administration, have fallen further into disfavor.</p> <p>France made some key mistakes, said Gen. Didier Castres, a former deputy chief of staff for operations in the early years of Operation Barkhane and its predecessor, Operation Serval. Among them, he said, was a patronizing approach that eventually irked the Malian authorities and the country's population.</p> <p>"We acted like a big brother who would turn to his little brother and tell him what to do and not do," said Général Castres, who is now retired. "We've been the know-it-all trying to apply templates that weren't suited to them."</p> <p>Another mistake, he said, was trying to resolve a multifaceted crisis primarily through military means.</p>

But Mali still appears to be pursuing this strategy, hiring Russian mercenaries from a shadowy outfit known as the [Wagner Group](#), which is backed by the Kremlin, according to officials and diplomats. In March, Malian soldiers and their Russian allies executed hundreds of men in Moura, in central Mali, [a recent New York Times investigation found](#).

The increasingly complex crisis in Mali, with its blurred lines between who is considered a rebel, a jihadist or just an ordinary villager, “isn’t a war that Wagner can win,” said Konimba Sidibé, a former minister in Mr. Keïta’s government.

In the early days of the French intervention, it was largely seen as a great success. “Mali isn’t a caliphate, and the probability that it could have become one in 2013 was quite strong,” Général Castres said. He argued that France and European allies had also helped Mali strengthen its military capacities.

French troops had far better equipment and training than their Malian counterparts, and could conduct difficult operations from the air as well as the ground, where [elite units](#) in air-conditioned armored vehicles [combed the scrubby savanna for insurgents and their arms](#).

But the French soldiers often had little or no experience in any African country, a limited understanding of the complex dynamics at play, and no way of communicating with the Malians they were there to protect. They spent much of their time in heavily protected bases, and came to be seen by many as arrogant and ineffective.

France will now run its counterterrorism efforts in the region from neighboring Niger, as well as Chad, where the Barkhane Operation has been headquartered.

The French pullout from Mali also adds uncertainty to the future of the United Nations’ peacekeeping operation in the country. Last week, Germany, the biggest contributor to the mission, announced that it was ending its participation just three months after voting for its renewal.

The French announced their departure in February, and as they have closed their bases and wound down operations, attacks have continued to increase.

On Aug. 7, Islamist insurgents [killed](#) 42 Malian soldiers in an attack 70 miles south of the French base in the ancient city of Gao. Just across the border with Burkina Faso, 15 Burkinabe soldiers were [killed](#) days later. A former government minister, who asked not to be named for fear of reprisals, said that there were jihadist sleeper cells in the capital, Bamako, waiting for the right opportunity to strike. Such an opportunity may be presented by the departure of the French, he said.

Some of France’s unpopularity in Mali — as well as in several other African countries — stems from its past as a colonial power, and from the post-independence meddling in African politics by its presidents, a system known as *Françafrique*, largely motivated by French economic interests.

Though French officials speak of *Françafrique* as a thing of the past, in Mali the system is often seen as alive and well, and opposition to it has become a political rallying cry. Thus, when Mali expelled France’s ambassador last year, many Malians welcomed the move. He has not been replaced.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/15 Relatives drone-strike victims still stranded
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/15/us/politics/us-drone-strike-afghanistan-relatives.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Soon after the U.S. military mistakenly killed 10 civilians, including seven children, last August in the final U.S. drone strike before American troops withdrew from Afghanistan, the Biden administration pledged to help surviving members of the family relocate to the United States for their safety.</p> <p>Nearly a year later, fewer than a dozen of the 144 family members have been resettled in the United States and 32 people remain trapped in Afghanistan with little hope of getting out soon, advocates for</p>

the family said on Monday. The rest have been stuck for months in a diplomatic limbo after being taken to three countries to await screening to enter the United States.

The odyssey of the [family members of Zemari Ahmadi](#), the driver of a white Toyota sedan that was struck by the American drone, and others employed by Mr. Ahmadi's aid organization in Afghanistan is a saga of passport problems, bureaucratic red tape and Taliban capriciousness. On one day in June, for instance, 43 family members traveling overland were allowed to cross into Pakistan. The very next day, a similar group was turned back at the border after the Taliban imposed new travel-document rules.

Lawyers for the family members praised the efforts of the Pentagon and the State Department to help evacuate their clients, and said they had refrained from commenting publicly until now to protect their clients' safety. But they said much more needed to be done and were now breaking their silence.

"As the anniversary of the strike approaches, the public needs to know that the government is failing to meet its promises, and our clients' lives are in the United States' hands," said Brett Max Kaufman, a senior staff attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union, which is representing members of Mr. Ahmadi's family as well as other employees of Nutrition & Education International, Mr. Ahmadi's aid organization in Afghanistan.

Mr. Ahmadi's family members and other employees of the aid organization the U.S. government agreed to evacuate are a small subset of the more than 120,000 Afghans who were airlifted after the Taliban seized control of the country last August, and the thousands who sought to flee but have so far failed.

Officials said the prospects for extracting the last 32 family members hiding in Afghanistan became more complicated after the C.I.A. two weeks ago [killed Ayman al-Zawahri](#), the leader of Al Qaeda, while he was hiding out in a house in a crowded section of the Taliban-controlled Afghan capital.

"I remain increasingly scared for the people — including Zemari's family members and our N.E.I. colleagues — who are still stuck in Afghanistan without any certainty or timeline to get out," Steven Kwon, the founder and president of Nutrition & Education International, said in a statement.

"The U.S. government must keep its promise and get all those affected by its mistaken drone strike to safety before it's too late," Mr. Kwon said.

Pentagon officials said they had been working for months along with State Department and White House colleagues to evacuate the family members and other employees of the aid organization, despite no longer having any American military or diplomatic presence in Afghanistan.

"The Department of Defense, in coordination with other U.S. government departments and agencies, continues to take steps to respond to the Aug. 29, 2021, airstrike in Kabul, Afghanistan," Todd Breasseale, the acting Pentagon press secretary, said in a statement. "To protect the privacy of the family members, as well as to help protect their safety and security, we are not able to provide more information regarding these efforts at this time," Mr. Breasseale added.

Senior Defense Department officials and military commanders acknowledged soon after [the drone strike](#) that Mr. Ahmadi had nothing to do with the Islamic State, contrary to what military officials had previously asserted. Mr. Ahmadi's only connection to the terrorist group appeared to be a fleeting and innocuous interaction with people in what the military believed was an Islamic State safe house in Kabul, an initial link that led military analysts to make one misjudgment after another while [tracking Mr. Ahmadi's movements in the sedan](#) for the next eight hours.

In addition to resettlement in the United States, the Pentagon [has offered unspecified condolence payments](#) to family members. Administration officials and lawyers for the family said negotiations over any payments have been suspended until all family members have been safely evacuated from Afghanistan.

Congress has authorized the Pentagon to pay up to \$3 million a year for payments to compensate for property damage, personal injury or deaths related to the actions of U.S. armed forces, as well as for “hero payments” to the family members of local allied forces, such as Afghan or Iraqi troops fighting Al Qaeda or ISIS.

Condolence payments for deaths caused by the American military have varied widely in recent years. In the 2019 fiscal year, for instance, [the Pentagon offered 71 such payments](#) — ranging from \$131 to \$35,000 — in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Almost everything senior defense officials asserted in the hours, days and weeks after the Aug. 29 drone strike turned out to be false. The explosives that the military claimed were loaded in the trunk of the sedan struck by the drone’s Hellfire missile were probably water bottles, and a secondary explosion in the courtyard in the densely populated Kabul neighborhood where the attack took place was probably a propane or gas tank, officials said.

Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie Jr., the head of the military’s Central Command at the time, said [in a news conference last September](#) that the strike was carried out “in the profound belief” that the Islamic State was about to attack Hamid Karzai International Airport, as the organization had done three days earlier, killing about [170 civilians](#) and [13 U.S. troops](#).

The acknowledgment of the mistaken strike came a week after [a New York Times investigation of video evidence](#) challenged assertions by the military that it had struck a vehicle carrying explosives meant for the airport.

Several weeks later, in November, Colin H. Kahl, the under secretary of defense for policy, offered the condolence payments and the help resettling to Mr. Kwon in a virtual meeting.

One of the first matters was to define the size of the group to receive the assistance. One group included immediate and extended family members of Mr. Ahmadi. A second group was made up of other employees of the aid organization and some of their family members. In all, 144 people — including a significant number of children — were identified as warranting assistance to leave the country for their safety, said Mr. Kaufman, the A.C.L.U. lawyer.

With no American personnel remaining in Afghanistan, the State Department hired a contractor to help feed, clothe and shelter the family members while U.S. officials sought to arrange flights or other means for the Afghans to leave the country.

The group faced stumbling blocks right away. Many of the individuals had no passports or other travel documents that the Taliban and receiving countries would accept. Commercial flights in and out of the country were sporadic. Two elderly relatives died during the waiting period.

But slowly, the line of family members began to move. Most flew directly to one of three countries — Albania, Kosovo or Qatar — where, like many other Afghan refugees, they received medical care and security processing as refugees. Some joined a convoy and drove out of the country into Pakistan, and on to one of the transit countries.

The first family members arrived in the United States in May, with others coming in July. In all, 11 family members have resettled in three states, which Mr. Kaufman did not identify for security reasons.

“That some members of Zemari’s family have begun to pick up the pieces of their lives with a new start in America is undoubtedly good news,” Mr. Kaufman said. “But the bottom line is that the government has not done enough, and many of our clients remain in danger.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/15 US: no release \$3.5B Afghan frozen funds
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/15/us/politics/us-afghanistan-funds-taliban.html

The Biden administration on Monday ruled out releasing \$3.5 billion in funds held in the United States back to Afghanistan's central bank anytime soon, citing the discovery that Al Qaeda's leader had taken refuge in the heart of Kabul apparently with the protection of the Taliban government.

The position on the funds was outlined on the one-year anniversary of the takeover of Afghanistan by the extremist Taliban militia and just over two weeks after [an American drone strike killed Ayman al-Zawahri](#), the Qaeda leader, on the balcony of a house tied to a faction of the Taliban coalition in an exclusive enclave of the Afghan capital.

"We do not see recapitalization of the D.A.B. as a near-term option," said Thomas West, the American government's special representative for Afghanistan, referring to the initials for the central bank. He noted that American officials have engaged for months with the central bank about how to shore up Afghanistan's economy but have not secured persuasive guarantees that the money would not fall into terrorist hands.

"We do not have confidence that that institution has the safeguards and monitoring in place to manage assets responsibly," Mr. West said in a statement, [previously reported by](#) The Wall Street Journal. "And needless to say, the Taliban's sheltering of Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahri reinforces deep concerns we have regarding diversion of funds to terrorist groups."

Ned Price, the State Department spokesman, said the administration was searching for alternative ways to use the money to help Afghans at a time when millions are afflicted by a growing hunger crisis.

"Right now, we're looking at mechanisms that could be put in place to see to it that these \$3.5 billion in preserved assets make their way efficiently and effectively to the people of Afghanistan in a way that doesn't make them ripe for diversion to terrorist groups or elsewhere," Mr. Price said.

The issue of the frozen money remains one of the most sensitive questions a year after President Biden's decision to withdraw the last American troops from Afghanistan, leading to the fall of the Western-backed government and the Taliban's return to power. The White House has been acutely sensitive to the approach of the anniversary, anticipating that it would renew criticism of the [chaotic American withdrawal](#) and the restoration of a draconian regime of repression, especially targeting women and girls.

The operation that [found and killed al-Zawahri](#) has only [accentuated the debate](#) in recent days. Mr. Biden and his allies have argued that the success in hunting al-Zawahri down showed that the United States can still fight terrorists without a large deployment of ground troops. His critics have pointed to the operation as evidence of the fecklessness of Mr. Biden's decision to leave Afghanistan since it showed that the Taliban is [once again sheltering Qaeda figures](#) as it did in the months and years before the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken has said that al-Zawahri's presence showed that the Taliban had "grossly violated" the withdrawal agreement first [negotiated by President Donald J. Trump](#) and carried out by Mr. Biden. But the administration has not explained what if any consequences it would impose on the Taliban as a result. The Taliban has [denied knowing that al-Zawahri was living in Kabul](#) with his family, even though the Haqqani clan, a terrorist faction of the government, appeared to be sheltering him.

U.S. intelligence agencies have concluded since the drone strike that while a handful of longtime members of Al Qaeda remain in Afghanistan, [the group has not reconstituted a major presence](#) there since the American withdrawal. But some counterterrorism experts said the judgment may be too optimistic.

The funds at issue on Monday are part of a total of \$7 billion deposited at the Federal Reserve Bank in New York by the Afghan central bank at the time of the Taliban takeover. Mr. Biden froze the money and [decided to split it in half](#), with one share available to the relatives of Sept. 11 victims to pursue legally and the other to be used to support the needs of the Afghan people, like for humanitarian relief.

	<p>The United States is working with allies around the world to establish an international trust fund with the \$3.5 billion meant to help the Afghan people. Officials said they have made considerable progress in setting up such a trust fund but have not said when it will be created and how it will work.</p> <p>The Afghan economy has collapsed in the year since the Taliban takeover, leading to mass starvation and a wave of refugees. In recent days, the United States announced that it would send \$80 million to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization to help combat hunger in Afghanistan, as well as \$40 million to UNICEF to support educating Afghan children, particularly girls, and \$30 million to U.N. Women to aid Afghan women and girls seeking social protection services and running civil society organizations.</p>
Return to Top	

Suspicious, Unusual

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 German industry at risk as Rhine falls
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/science-germany-climate-and-environment-19367559940c2f78ad479c44bf2d749a
GIST	<p>BERLIN (AP) — Germany’s main industry lobby group warned Tuesday that factories may have to throttle production or halt it completely because plunging water levels on the Rhine River are making it harder to transport cargo.</p> <p>Water levels on the Rhine at Emmerich, near the Dutch border, dropped by a further four centimeters (1.6 inches) in 24 hours, hitting zero on the depth gauge.</p> <p>Authorities say the shipping lane itself still has a depth of almost 200 centimeters (six feet, six inches), but the record low measurement Tuesday morning highlights the extreme lack of water caused by months of drought affecting much of Europe.</p> <p>“The ongoing drought and the low water levels threaten the supply security of industry,” said Holger Loesch, deputy head of the business lobby group BDI.</p> <p>Loesch said shifting cargo from river to train or transport was difficult because of limited rail capacity and a lack of drivers.</p> <p>“It’s only a question of time before facilities in the chemical and steel industry have to be switched off, petroleum and construction materials won’t reach their destination, and high-capacity and heavy-goods transports can’t be carried out anymore,” he said, adding that this could lead to supply bottlenecks and short-time work might result.</p> <p>Loesch warned that energy supplies could also be further strained as ships carrying coal and gasoline along the Rhine are affected.</p> <p>He echoed concerns that climate change could make droughts more frequent in the future, and urged the government to help closely monitor water levels and react early to potential transportation problems on Germany’s waterways.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/15 Heat waves to intensify in areas of WA
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/these-areas-of-wa-are-likely-to-get-hotter-but-people-keep-moving-there/
GIST	Many parts of Washington will see more severe heat waves in coming decades, but that isn’t stopping an influx of new residents from moving to those communities.

New projections from a New York-based research group predict Benton and Franklin counties — home to the Tri-Cities and among the fastest-growing Washington counties in the past decade — could see heat waves above 90 degrees last nearly twice as long as they currently do. The number of days above 100 in those areas is likely to double, according to the models.

More temperate King, Snohomish and Pierce counties could see twice as many days in the mid- to high 80s. In Pierce County, eight days could hit above 90 by 2053, up from just three predicted next year, according to the new report from the First Street Foundation.

The analysis is part of a nationwide look at the future of extreme heat as experts say climate change [is contributing to more severe heat waves](#), some of them deadly.

Other parts of the country will see more dire changes. By 2053, the report predicts an “extreme heat belt” stretching from Chicago to Texas, where temperatures will hit 125 and beyond. More areas of the Southeast will see 100 days of 100-plus temperatures each year. (The First Street Foundation says its peer-reviewed model combines [existing emissions forecasts](#) with details such as land surface temperature, canopy cover, elevation and distance to water to project temperatures in 2023 and 2053.)

While much of the West Coast is cooler, the analysis predicts the region will see longer stretches of hot days relative to what’s normal now. Without widespread air conditioning, those temperatures can still pose health risks.

“The big issue is people just aren’t prepared,” said Jeremy Porter, chief research officer at the First Street Foundation.

The analysis is “consistent with what we’re actually seeing in the data, especially in Eastern Washington,” said state climatologist Nick Bond. While temperatures are lower in Western Washington, even cooler areas are seeing more hot nights.

The heat projections join previous reports on increasing flood and [wildfire risk](#), which residents can look up for their home or community at [riskfactor.com](#). And those and similar risk assessments are increasingly available on major listing sites such as Redfin and Realtor.com.

But even as home shoppers may be more aware than ever of the environmental risks to properties in heat- and fire-prone areas of the state, that isn’t stopping them from moving to those same scorching regions.

Franklin and Benton counties already see the most days surpassing 90 degrees each year, and will likely see more over the next 30 years.

Already this year, the area saw a [record-breaking heat wave](#) of 100 degrees or higher for 11 straight days, and a 38-year-old Richland man who was homeless collapsed and died during the heat, the [Tri-City Herald reported](#).

Even so, the two counties have seen the first- and third-fastest population growth in the state since 2010, according to state data.

Home values in the area are up 20%-23% since the same time last year, according to Zillow. Benton County rents have climbed 28% in the past five years, according to Apartment List.

“I think inherently if you are moving to a desert — there’s a reason trees don’t grow,” said Jeff Losey, executive director of the Homebuilders Association of Tri-Cities. “One of the reasons people move to the Tri-Cities or Yakima is because we have 300 days of sunshine. That’s attractive.”

The same trend is playing out all over the country.

New residents flocked to areas with the highest heat risk, such as Phoenix and Austin, increasing their populations by an average of 5% and as much as 16% from 2016 to 2020, according to a [Redfin analysis](#). Areas with the fewest homes facing fire, flood and drought risk saw population declines. One potential draw? More affordable homes, according to Redfin.

The heat has made A/C standard in new construction in the Tri-Cities, Losey said. “There is nowhere you can live over here and stay comfortable without having some sort of air conditioning.”

West of the mountains, requests for air conditioners are still rare in the single-family homes built by Kurt Wilson and his Puyallup company Soundbuilt Homes.

Interest has ticked up over the past decade, but “still less than 5% of our homes opt to upgrade,” Wilson said.

“It’s not like all of a sudden we’re turning to Arizona, where we’re dealing with all-tile roofs and stucco,” he said.

Still, Wilson predicts air conditioning could become more common because of state energy regulations. Those rules require single-family home developers to earn a certain number of “energy credits” based on various green features and incentivize heat pumps, which can operate as air conditioners.

Wilson argues the regulations are burdensome for developers and costly for homebuyers. But compared to the other features he can add to a new house to meet the state rules, heat pumps “can create value for those buyers.”

Meanwhile, thousands of renters and homeowners across the state will continue to live in older buildings without A/C units as temperatures rise.

“People die of heat-related health conditions ... We’re not supposed to be this hot,” said Leslie Hines, energy program manager at the Colville nonprofit Rural Resources, which offers air conditioner assistance.

Seniors centers often become cooling centers during heat waves, but in rural areas, those hubs can be hours away.

“We have case workers who’ve gone into people’s homes,” Hines said. “They contact me immediately and say, ‘It was over 90 degrees in that house. Get them an air conditioner, please.’”

After last year’s deadly heat dome, the state expanded an energy assistance program typically used for winter heating bills to also cover air conditioning. To qualify, applicants must make 150% of the poverty level or less, or \$32,940 a year for a family of three.

Since October, nonprofits have distributed about 3,400 units across the state, according to the state Department of Commerce.

Rural Resources has received 320 requests for air conditioning units this year and given out around 250 free-standing portable air conditioners so far, Hines said.

“We did no advertising,” Hines said. “You send one to an apartment complex and the whole apartment complex finds out about it.”

In Yakima, “Our staff are at it right now,” said Anthony Peterson, interim CEO of the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) of Washington. “Air conditioners are a hot commodity ... We’ve been creative to try to maximize every type of store we can purchase them from.”

The group has distributed nearly 200 units so far in the area, according to state data.

By 2053, Yakima County could see 12 more days above 90 degrees and five more days above 100 each year, according to the report.

“We get all seasons,” Peterson said, “and most of the time it’s extreme.”

[Return to Top](#)

Crime, Criminals

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 FBI: 84 child sex trafficking victims rescued
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/08/16/FBI-child-sex-trafficking-victims/8211660633420/
GIST	<p>Aug. 16 (UPI) -- More than 80 minors were rescued this month amid a two-week nationwide operation focused on locating victims of sex trafficking, authorities said.</p> <p>The annual FBI-led Operation Cross Country is a nationwide campaign that seeks to identify and locate victims of sex trafficking, and was held during the first two-weeks of this month and involved some 200 state, local and federal partners.</p> <p>In announcing the results of the operation on Monday, the FBI said law enforcement agents rescued 84 minors who were either victims of child sex trafficking or sexual exploitation.</p> <p>An additional 37 missing children were also found during the operation, authorities said.</p> <p>The FBI said the average age of the victims found was 15.5 years old with the youngest victim being 11.</p> <p>"Human trafficking is among the most heinous crimes the FBI encounters," FBI Director Christopher Wray said in a statement. "Unfortunately, such crimes -- against both adults and children -- are far more common than most people realize.</p> <p>"As we did in this operation, the FBI and our partners will continue to find and arrest traffickers, identify and help victims and raise awareness of the exploitation [of] our most vulnerable populations."</p> <p>Agents also identified or arrested 85 people on suspicion of committing child sexual exploitation and human trafficking offenses.</p> <p>Among the investigations, authorities located 19 missing children and arrested four traffickers in Atlanta alone.</p> <p>"The Justice Department is committed to doing everything in our power to combat the insidious crimes of human trafficking that devastate survivors and their families, said Attorney General Merrick Garland.</p> <p>According to the Human Trafficking Institute, which seeks to stamp out modern slavery, there were 449 victims identified in human trafficking cases filed last year in the United States, with minors accounting for 57% of all victims.</p> <p>In sex trafficking cases, minors accounted for 66% of all victims, the institute said.</p> <p>Michelle DeLaune, president and chief executive of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, said that the success of Operation Cross Country proves what she sees every day, which is that "children are being bought and sold for sex in communities across the country by traffickers, gangs and even family members.</p>

	"We're proud to support the FBI's efforts to prioritize the safety of children," DeLaune said. "This national operation highlights the need for all child-serving professionals to continue to focus on the wellbeing of children and youth to prevent them being targeted in the first place."
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/15 Man jailed for loud noise panic at airport
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/california-man-jailed-after-sharp-sound-vegas-airport-panic/
GIST	<p>LAS VEGAS (AP) — A California man jailed in Las Vegas on suspicion of causing a loud noise that sparked panic and travel delays Sunday at Harry Reid International Airport had been arrested at the airport less than 24 hours earlier for allegedly causing a disturbance near a ticket counter, a police official said Monday.</p> <p>The sharp sound of a door closing or a trash can toppling — apparently mistaken for gunfire — caused passengers to abandon security lines about 4:30 a.m. Sunday. More loud noises reverberated through the airport's busy Terminal 1 as metal posts were knocked over in the chaos, Las Vegas police Officer Larry Hadfield said.</p> <p>Stefan Mathias Hutchison's alleged role causing the sound was not immediately described.</p> <p>"The initial sound was a door or trash can falling," Hadfield said. "That triggered patrons to leave lines, which caused stanchions to fall, causing a succession of loud sounds."</p> <p>No serious injuries were reported by airport officials, but social media posts showed people running and, later, crowded in concourses of the terminal that serves most domestic flights.</p> <p>Dozens of commercial flights in and out of Las Vegas were canceled or delayed throughout the day, and thousands of people were affected. Passengers who had been screened by Transportation Security Administration were required to re-screen at security checkpoints before boarding their flights.</p> <p>Hutchison, 33, of Carmichael, California, was taken into custody at the airport on a felony burglary charge and held at the Clark County Detention Center in Las Vegas pending a court appearance, records showed. Hutchison was not armed, Hadfield said.</p> <p>On Saturday, Hutchison had been arrested about 8:30 a.m. on misdemeanor misconduct and resisting an officer charges, and freed from jail without bail later that day. The initial police call in that case was about a possible airport security breach, Hadfield said.</p> <p>On Monday, Hutchison refused to be taken from the jail to appear before a judge. Court records showed he was rescheduled to appear in court Wednesday morning. A deputy public defender who was appointed temporarily to represent him did not immediately respond to messages.</p> <p>Airport spokesman Joe Rajchel said Monday he had no information about people injured in the chaos. He said operations had returned to normal. Reid airport is one of the 10 busiest airports in the world, according to the trade group Airports Council International.</p> <p>"While Sunday's incident was a false alarm, the response to any given situation is unique and will be informed by the confirmed details available in real time," the airport said in a statement.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/15 Julian Assange lawyers sue CIA for spying
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/media/2022/aug/16/julian-assange-lawyers-sue-cia-over-alleged-spying
GIST	Lawyers for WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange are suing the US Central Intelligence Agency and its former director Mike Pompeo in a suit filed in a New York district court on Monday, alleging the agency recorded their conversations and copied data from their phones and computers.

The attorneys, along with two journalists joining the suit, are Americans and allege that the CIA violated their US constitutional protections for confidential discussions with Assange, who is Australian.

The suit alleges that the CIA worked with a security firm contracted by the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where Assange was living at the time, to spy on the WikiLeaks founder, his lawyers, journalists and others he met.

Assange is [facing extradition from Britain to the US](#), where he is charged with violating the US Espionage Act by publishing US military and diplomatic files in 2010 related to the Afghanistan and Iraq wars.

Robert Boyle, a New York attorney representing the plaintiffs in the lawsuit, said the alleged spying on Assange's attorneys means the WikiLeaks founder's right to a fair trial has "now been tainted, if not destroyed".

"There should be sanctions, even up to dismissal of those charges, or withdrawal of an extradition request," Boyle told reporters.

The suit was filed by attorneys Margaret Ratner Kunstler and Deborah Hrbek, and journalists Charles Glass and John Goetz.

They all visited Assange while he was living inside the Ecuadorian embassy in London under political asylum, since withdrawn.

The suit names the CIA, former CIA director and former US secretary of state Pompeo, and the security firm Undercover Global as defendants.

The suit alleges Undercover Global, which had a security contract with the embassy, swept information on their electronic devices, including communications with Assange, and provided it to the CIA.

In addition it placed microphones around the embassy and sent recordings, as well as footage from security cameras, to the CIA, the suit alleges.

This, the attorneys claim, violated privacy protections for US citizens.

Assange is awaiting a ruling on his appeal of the British extradition order to the US.

The charges he faces could bring a sentence of up to 175 years in prison.

The suit alleges that while Undercover Global controlled security at the embassy, each visitor had to leave their electronic devices with a guard before seeing Assange.

"The information contained on the plaintiff's devices was copied and, ultimately, given to the CIA," it reads. "Defendant Pompeo was aware of and approved the copying of information contained on plaintiffs' mobile electronic devices and the surreptitious audio monitoring of their meetings with Assange," the suit claims.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/15 Ecuador city dramatic rise gang bombings
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/15/ecuador-state-emergency-guayaquil-rise-bombings-gangs-cocaine
GIST	Ecuador's embattled president, Guillermo Lasso, has declared a fourth state of emergency in the violence-racked city of Guayaquil after a deadly bomb attack killed at least five and injured 17 people.

Ecuador's interior minister, Patricio Carrillo, described Sunday's explosion as a "declaration of war on the state" by organised crime in the country's largest city and it has been classified as a terrorist act. Security forces will be mobilised for a month and allowed to make home inspections.

Images from the scene showed the front of houses torn off and cars smeared in blood with their windows blown in the working-class Cristo de Consuelo neighbourhood. Eight houses and two cars were destroyed in the early morning blast, according to authorities.

The bomb attack marks a dramatic escalation in the violent tactics used by criminal gangs in Ecuador's largest city, which has seen [an exponential rise in murders as rival gangs battle for dominance of cocaine trafficking](#) routes to Europe and the US.

Wedged between Colombia and Peru, the world's biggest cocaine producers, Ecuador has seen a shocking levels of violence, including decapitated bodies hanging from pedestrian bridges and six brutal [prison massacres](#) in which nearly 400 inmates have been killed since February 2021.

Since the decree 11 raids have been carried out in the city and five people have been arrested, Carrillo told journalists on Monday.

"What concerns us most ... is the capacity [the gang] now have to build elements in a homemade way," Carrillo [tweeted](#) after the blast, referring to the explosives used in the act. "We are investigating how they are reaching these capabilities to commit barbaric acts."

The incident is the deadliest so far in a dramatic rise in bomb attacks in the country with 145 so far this year, half which occurred in Guayaquil, according to [government figures](#).

"Criminal gangs have become a government within a government in Ecuador," wrote Guayaquil's mayor, [Cynthia Viteri](#), in an [open letter](#) posted on twitter to Lasso, who took office as president last year.

"We have witnessed hangings on bridges, planned murders on motorcycles, rapes in shopping malls and school buses," she wrote. "Extortion charged to innocent shopkeepers, and the deaths of more than a dozen child victims from stray bullets."

"A president is the protector of his people but so far we have not seen a single safe step to combat crime," the letter continues. "Who is in charge here, organized crime or an enslaved government?"

On [Twitter](#), Lasso responded that the enemy was "narco-terrorism ... not the government", adding that "in countries that have lived through these painful experiences, the authorities act in unity and not divided". However, he has faced mounting criticism as the rising violence shows no sign of abating.

Guayaquil was one of the [50 most violent cities](#) in the world in 2021, according to Insight Crime, a thinktank. It is the first time an Ecuadorian city has appeared on the list.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/15 Muslim killings in Albuquerque
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/15/us/albuquerque-muslim-killings.html
GIST	<p>ALBUQUERQUE — Five years ago, Muhammad Syed was eyeing a new life with his family in a new land. They had fled war-torn Afghanistan and resettled as refugees into a small duplex near the airport in Albuquerque. Mr. Syed found work as a truck driver. But then the troubles began.</p> <p>Coming from a culture where women largely stayed at home, he grew enraged with his wife as she was learning how to drive, grabbing her hair and kicking her out of the car, according to one of several reports of domestic violence the police were called to investigate. A security camera showed him slashing the tires of another woman's car outside Albuquerque's largest mosque, and he was banned from coming back to their place of worship.</p>

When his daughter enrolled in college, he tried to force her to bring her brother to class as a chaperone. And when she became romantically involved with an Afghan man from a different branch of Islam — a Shiite, while Mr. Syed and his family were Sunni — he attacked the young man and threatened to kill him, the man later told the police.

“Syed was explosive, violent, always seeking revenge,” said Sharif Ahmadi Hadi, an Afghan immigrant who, together with his brother, opened a halal market serving Albuquerque’s growing Muslim community and knew the Syed family. “We left Afghanistan to get away from people like him. But they followed us here.”

Now Mr. Syed has been identified as the leading suspect in the harrowing [string of murders](#) of four men, including Mr. Hadi’s younger brother, three of them Shiite Muslims, and the authorities said on Monday that Mr. Syed’s son, Shaheen Syed, purchased weapons with his father and may have helped him surveil one of the victims before his death.

One year after the chaotic withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, the killings, now connected by the authorities to a man who had prayed in the same mosque as the murder victims, have shaken the Muslim community in New Mexico with frightening echoes of the violence many of them had traveled half a world away to escape.

In Albuquerque, which took in more than 300 evacuees from Afghanistan over the past year after the fall of Kabul to the Taliban, the possibility that a foundational dispute of Islam could have been a factor in the killings in recent weeks was shocking. Sunni and Shiite Muslims differ in their beliefs over who was the proper successor to the Prophet Muhammad when he died nearly 1,400 years ago. While the historic division has fueled strife in several countries, including Iraq, Lebanon and Afghanistan, it has been rare in the United States.

Mr. Syed was charged in two of the killings, those of Aftab Hussein and Muhammad Afzaal Hussain, based in part on bullet casings found at the scenes. The police said Mr. Syed was also the main suspect in two more killings, including that of Mr. Hadi’s brother.

Shaheen Syed was charged last week with lying about his address when he purchased two guns in 2021. In a new court filing on Monday, federal prosecutors said he had lied to investigators about accompanying his father to gun stores when his father purchased weapons, including on Aug. 1, the day Muhammad Afzaal Hussain was killed.

The prosecutors also said that on Aug. 5, when Naeem Hussain was killed hours after attending a funeral for two of the most recent victims, cellphone tower data indicated that Shaheen Syed’s phone was in the “general area” of the funeral around 3:39 p.m., but 20 minutes later had moved closer to the area where Mr. Hussain was killed in his car. The data also showed that Muhammad Syed’s phone was in the area of Mr. Hussain’s killing shortly after 4 p.m.

The filing also noted that Shaheen Syed and one of his brothers, Adil Syed, were involved in a shooting at a Walmart in July 2021. During what Shaheen Syed had described as a road rage incident, Adil had fired a gun once at the car of a man who he and his brother said had also been armed. No one appeared to be charged in the incident.

Muhammad Syed has told the police he had no involvement in the murders, and lawyers for both him and his son declined to discuss the cases. But the son’s lawyer, John C. Anderson, told the court on Monday that his client should not be detained based on “exceedingly thin and speculative allegations” about crimes that he had not been charged with. He said the cellphone tower data gave no indication of whether Shaheen Syed was 100 yards or five miles from the murder scene.

The police said they were not sure whether the crimes could be considered either serial killings or hate crimes until they had done more investigating. Mr. Syed’s long trail of violence and interpersonal conflict since his arrival in Albuquerque seemed to defy easy categorization.

A Friend Goes Missing

For weeks as the killings unfolded, Albuquerque's small Muslim community — no more than 10,000 people in a city of half a million — had been on edge. Some families were hunkering down in their homes; others were making plans to leave New Mexico altogether.

But Naeem Hussain, a 25-year-old immigrant from Pakistan who had recently started his own trucking business, made a point of being back in Albuquerque on Aug. 5 to mourn the loss of two of the murdered men: a fellow Pakistani, Muhammad Afzaal Hussain, 27, a city planner who had moved to Albuquerque to attend the University of New Mexico, and an Afghan, Aftab Hussein, 41, who had worked at Flying Star, a well-known Albuquerque cafe.

Naeem Hussain had donned a black T-shirt and blue trousers and headed to the funerals early that afternoon. Afterward, he and a few friends who were fellow truck drivers parted ways and agreed to meet at Naeem's apartment a little later.

When Naeem didn't show up, his friends drove around to the Mahdavi Center, a Shiite mosque, for holiday services, at around 6 p.m. As Shiites, they were observing Muharram, to mark the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad.

Naeem never arrived. Later that night, when he wasn't answering his cellphone or texts, his friends grew nervous. They turned to Zenly, a transportation app that they often used to track one another on the road. It indicated Naeem's car was parked near the intersection of Truman Street and Grand Avenue.

At about 11:20 p.m., the men spotted Naeem's white 2020 Toyota 4Runner in the parking lot of Lutheran Family Services, where he was once employed as a case worker helping refugees resettle in Albuquerque. As they approached, they noticed the S.U.V.'s lights were on, the engine still running.

Naeem was slumped in the driver's seat, his blood spread across the front seats. The police opened a fourth murder investigation.

"My eyes were burning," said I. Hussein, one of Naeem's friends, one of several who feared giving their full names for fear that Shiites could continue to be targeted. "I couldn't go to sleep, the whole thing was coming to my head."

He and other Shiite Muslims in the city contacted one another nervously, wondering whether the killer could be not only a fellow Muslim, but a Sunni targeting his victims to coincide with the Shiite holiday.

The three victims killed in a 10-day span shared variations of the name Hussain, popular in the Shiite community because of its association to the prophet's grandson. Two of the victims were Shiites, but the realization that the only Sunni victim, Muhammad Afzaal Hussain, also shared the name led many to wonder if the killer may have targeted him by mistake.

Naeem's friends left town in fear, driving to Virginia to stay with a friend.

"We came all the way from that side of the world because of this whole situation," said I. Hussain, referring to the discrimination they suffered at the hands of Sunnis in Afghanistan, "and now they are doing the same thing they were doing there."

The mystery of who had committed the crime may have been at least initially answered when the police announced that Naeem's death was one of the four in which Mr. Syed was a primary suspect. The question of why remained unanswered.

A Father's Violent Discipline

Though Mr. Syed claimed to have fought the Taliban in Afghanistan, no record of military service has emerged so far. After arriving in the United States in 2016, the family struggled to make ends meet, according to an Afghan friend who visited their home on numerous occasions. Mr. Syed, who had worked as a cook for a construction company in Afghanistan, eventually became a truck driver, though it was unclear how often he worked.

Starting almost immediately, though, police records detail a trail of troubling altercations between Mr. Syed and those around him.

His daughter, Lubna Syed, then 19 years old, reported to the police in May 2017 that her father had slapped her because she had made a phone call while he was talking to her. One of her brothers, perhaps covering for her father, told the police that she had “imagination issues,” and no one was charged.

That July, she called the police again to report “ongoing verbal and physical disputes with her very conservative Muslim parents.”

Ms. Syed told the officers that she had been arguing with her parents after they insisted that one of her brothers escort her to class at the University of New Mexico. Mr. Syed denied hitting his daughter, the officer wrote, but Ms. Syed appeared to have some redness on her arm and swelling around one eye.

“Based on cultural differences and a statement from Lubna saying that she did not want her father arrested because it would only make their family dynamic worse, we decided to not make an arrest,” the officer wrote.

But just five months later, the police charged Mr. Syed with battery after Iftikhar Amir, his daughter’s boyfriend at the time, said that Mr. Syed, along with Mr. Syed’s wife and one of his sons, had beaten him after finding him in a car with the daughter.

Mr. Amir told the police that Ms. Syed’s family did not want her to date him, and he told police two months later that Mr. Syed had threatened to kill him. In both cases, he did not want to press charges.

Later, he and Lubna Syed were married, friends said; they bought a house together in November 2021. Both declined to comment.

The police were called back to the Syed home repeatedly: when Mr. Syed’s wife said Mr. Syed grabbed her by the hair and threw her to the floor; when his son said he hit him on the head with a spoon. Friends of Mr. Amir said he felt threatened by his father-in-law because he did not want his daughter associating with a Shiite.

Mr. Amir had been a close friend of Aftab Hussein, the cafe worker who was fatally shot in late July. Aftab Hussein’s brother Altaf Hussain Samadi, 32, said Mr. Amir told him that he believed his marriage to Lubna Syed had prompted Mr. Syed’s fury. “He said, ‘He should do something back to me, not to others if he has a problem with me,’” Mr. Samadi recalled.

‘A Place We Could Feel at Home’

The first death — one that Mr. Syed has not been charged with, though the police said he was the leading suspect — occurred in November, months before the other three shootings. Mohammad Zahir Ahmadi, the younger brother of the halal market’s owner, Mr. Hadi, was shot in the head while smoking a cigarette in the parking lot behind their business.

The brothers had made Albuquerque their home after trying out Philadelphia and Tucson, Ariz. New Mexico’s largest city, with its dry climate, monsoon rains and large Hispanic population, “looks like Kabul,” Mr. Hadi said. “The people look like Afghan people. I knew this was a place we could feel at home.”

With their business, Mr. Hadi said they got to know many people in the Muslim community, including the Syed family. One day when Mr. Ahmadi was working the cash register, his brother said, Mr. Syed came in with four bags of rice he had purchased days earlier using food stamps. Mr. Syed demanded a cash refund, but Mr. Ahmadi explained that doing so would constitute food stamp fraud.

Mr. Syed was clearly angry, Mr. Hadi said, and came to the store in person to threaten the family on three separate occasions. Mr. Syed would call the brothers “kafir.” The word, intended to be derogatory, refers to nonbelievers who understand religion but opt to hide from it. Popularized in Saudi Arabia to denigrate Shiite Muslims, the term was later adopted by the Taliban in Afghanistan.

“When we’d tell him to leave, he’d just go to his car and sit in the parking lot waiting for us for hours,” Mr. Hadi said. “We called the police but they never showed up.”

The police said they had no record of any such calls for assistance. But in February 2020, surveillance images from the Islamic Center of New Mexico showed Mr. Syed slashing the tires of the car Mr. Hadi’s wife had parked outside the mosque there. Leaders of the mosque told Mr. Syed to stay away, and he did so for months.

Mr. Syed now stands accused of murder in the killings of Aftab Hussein and Muhammad Afzaal Hussain, and the police said they were still compiling their cases on the other two killings. Leaders of the Afghan community have said they are relieved that a suspect has been identified, but some have been reluctant to ascribe the killings to sectarian violence; the reasons for murder, they learned after decades of war, are often too complicated to fit simple labels.

Salim Anseri, a leader of the city’s Afghan community who knew Mr. Syed as well as all the victims, is one of those who is not ready to make a judgment. “Maybe he’s mentally ill, or had personal issues with the victims,” he said of Mr. Syed. “From what I can tell, it was personal issues.”

For Mr. Hadi, such distinctions matter little. Between fits of tears, he said he still had trouble going back to the spot where his brother’s life ended so abruptly.

“I still see him every day when I come to work,” Mr. Hadi said. “But he’s dead. Nothing is going to bring him back.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/15 Bellevue organized retail theft ring
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/suspects-accused-stealing-over-100k-merchandise-bellevue-appear-court/CL460A2QQJHUZO4BBM47H7KJRI/
GIST	<p>BELLEVUE, Wash. — The Bellevue Police Department has been busy investigating a number of retail robberies as the city’s Louis Vuitton and Nordstrom stores have been hit several times within a matter of months.</p> <p>The suspects involved in three different retail robberies were in court Monday morning for their arraignment hearing.</p> <p>Bellevue police say over \$100,000 of merchandise was stolen in these three incidents.</p> <p>In June, the Louis Vuitton store at The Shops at The Bravern was hit twice by the same group.</p> <p>In the latest sting, Billy Chambers, Memory Yearby and Earnetra Turner stole over \$93,000 in bags.</p> <p>The King County Prosecutor charged all three suspects with two counts of organized retail theft in the first degree.</p> <p>All three were in court Monday morning and pleaded not guilty.</p>

Detectives found the stolen bags for sale online, set up a buy and arrested Trey Kendall, who was charged with trafficking in stolen property in the first degree.

All four suspects have extensive criminal histories, according to charging documents.

“What we’re noticing is that these specific individuals are incredibly worrisome to the department because of how brazen they are,” said Alycia McKinney, Bellevue Police Department Acting Major. “They disregard the safety of employees, they walk in, they walk past security guards and they take the merchandise and they just walk out. They do have violent past history and criminal history, so we’re really concerned that this could turn violent at some point.”

In another incident, 24-year-old Janay Luckey stole nearly \$13,000 from the Nordstrom and Nordstrom Rack stores in Bellevue in October and November 2021.

She is also accused of selling the stolen merchandise online and has been charged with organized retail theft in the first degree and two counts of trafficking in stolen property in the first degree.

Luckey is also charged with five counts of retail theft and trafficking out of Seattle, totaling more than \$84,000 in those cases.

In a third incident, 62 bottles of perfume, totaling nearly \$7,000, were stolen from an Ulta in Factoria.

One of the suspects was arrested in Kent, and charges are pending against a second suspect who is also a suspect in the Louis Vuitton theft.

“When people rip things off out of stores, if it’s above \$750 that can be a felony crime,” said Casey McNerthney, a spokesperson for the King County Prosecutor’s Office. “Below that goes to a different office as a misdemeanor crime. But what we’re doing in the cases that are a few hundred dollars here and there is we’re working with city prosecutors to aggregate those cases to get to the amount over the felony threshold under the law, so that way we can have more accountability and a harsher sentence.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/15 Seattle police: Kia thefts spiking
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/tiktok-videos-may-causing-recent-spike-kia-thefts-in-seattle/281-f1adc70c-e3eb-44cb-bad8-51b0ff0f6999
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Police believe a recent spike in Kia vehicle thefts throughout Seattle could be tied to a series of videos shared on TikTok.</p> <p>The Seattle Police Department investigated 36 reports of stolen Kia's this July, up from five in July 2021. Investigators believe suspects may be using a method learned from TikTok that involves using a USB drive, cable or other tools in place of a key to start a vehicle.</p> <p>Police said Kia models Optima, Soul, Sorrento, Forte and Sportage were stolen throughout the city in July. The vehicles were manufactured between 2014 and 2021, according to police.</p> <p>Two teens were arrested earlier this month after reports of several suspects driving a stolen Kia. Investigators said the suspects were on a residential street in northwest Capitol Hill when they tried to steal a second Kia.</p> <p>Police said three suspects in the car fled from officers but two were eventually caught. A 17-year-old boy carrying a loaded "ghost gun" assembled from a firearm kit sold online and a 16-year-old boy were arrested, authorities said. The two teens were arrested for unlawful possession of a firearm and possession of a stolen vehicle.</p>

	<p>In a separate case, police found a stolen Kia in South Seattle and found evidence linking the theft to the same 16-year-old from the Capitol Hill incident. Police learned the 16-year-old reportedly learned to steal Kias through watching TikTok videos.</p> <p>Investigators have made several arrests tied to recent Kia thefts in the city. Authorities recommend owners of Kia vehicles to park in well-lit or secure areas when possible. Steering wheel locks and after-market ignition kill-switch can be deterrents against theft.</p> <p>TikTok released the following statement: "TikTok does not condone this behavior which categorically violates our policies and will be removed if found on our platform."</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/15 Port Orchard man sentenced for Capitol riot
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/port-orchard-man-sentenced-capitol-riot-charges/281-490517cd-995d-4bed-a342-62fe05d7cb28
GIST	<p>PORT ORCHARD, Wash. — A Port Orchard man was sentenced to 36 months of probation, including 30 days of intermittent confinement, for his involvement in the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol riot.</p> <p>John Cameron was also fined \$1,000 and must pay \$500 in restitution.</p> <p>Cameron initially faced four charges but ended up pleading guilty to one count of parading, demonstrating or picketing in a Capitol building following an agreement with federal prosecutors. The charge carried a maximum sentence of six months in prison, five years probation and/or a fine of \$5,000.</p> <p>On Jan. 8, 2021, the FBI received a tip indicating that Cameron had been at the U.S. Capitol riot two days earlier. The tipster provided the FBI with a link to Cameron's Facebook account, which included posts and pictures documenting his trip to Washington D.C. for the "Stop the Steal" rally, according to probable cause documents.</p> <p>Cameron posted a picture on his Facebook page that morning showing himself dressed in a "Make America Great Again" cap and a black hooded sweatshirt with a t-shirt on top that read "count all legal votes," according to court documents.</p> <p>CCTV video taken within the capitol building showed a man matching Cameron's description entering through the Senate Wing Door at around 2:20 p.m. on Jan. 6.</p> <p>The man made his way to the Crypt, and then toward the Memorial Door on the east side of the building. Video shows him exiting the Capitol by climbing through a broken window near the Senate Wing Door at around 2:42 p.m.</p> <p>Cameron posted other photos and videos on his publicly accessible Facebook account of himself and the crowd on restricted grounds of the U.S. Capitol, according to court documents. One video, captioned "Civil disobedience," showed rioters breaching the secured areas of the scaffolding surrounding the Capitol building.</p> <p>Cameron posted another video of himself on a D.C. Metro train after leaving the Capitol describing the events of the day. "Was it pretty?" Cameron said. "No. Did it make a statement? Yes."</p> <p>Cameron was officially charged for his participation in the Capitol riot on Dec. 10, 2021, and was arrested on Jan. 5, 2022. He entered a guilty plea on May 4.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/15 Seattle mayor decries weekend shootings
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SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/flurry-of-seattle-weekend-shootings-unacceptable-mayor-harrell-says/
GIST	<p>After a weekend of relentless gun violence, Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell on Monday called the spate of shootings “unacceptable” and emphasized the importance of making Seattle “a city where safety is an inherent right.”</p> <p>Between Friday and Sunday evenings, seven shootings in Seattle and Renton injured about a dozen people and killed one man, who was shot near Capitol Hill’s Cal Anderson Park. Among the wounded is a 14-year-old girl shot in the leg as more than 80 rounds were fired from around a bar near T-Mobile Park.</p> <p>“We know that these kinds of tragedies are quite frankly just unacceptable in the city of Seattle and in this country,” Harrell said during a news conference, also reiterating his goal of increasing police presence and pressing for changes to statewide gun safety laws.</p> <p>Five of the dozen people treated for gunshot wounds at Harborview Medical Center between Friday and Sunday remain in serious condition in the intensive care unit, said hospital spokesperson Susan Gregg.</p> <p>Harborview’s gunshot victims — six males and six females — are between 14 and 34 years old.</p> <p>The King County Medical Examiner’s Office, meanwhile, identified the man killed early Saturday near Cal Anderson Park as Mercer Roy and determined he died from multiple gunshot wounds.</p> <p>A memorial across the street from the park’s basketball court has been set up to commemorate Roy, 32. Flowers, empty liquor bottles and a Nike shoe box surround candles spelling Roy’s name, and posters with pictures and heartfelt prayers are tied to a fence.</p> <p>One message reads: “Rest in Paradise, love you, miss you.”</p> <p>Roy is one of 36 people killed in Seattle homicides so far this year, according to preliminary data compiled by The Seattle Times with information from police, prosecutors and the King County Medical Examiner’s Office. All but six of those people died from gunshot wounds.</p> <p>That puts Seattle on pace to far surpass in 2022 the number of homicides in the city last year, when 41 people were killed. The city’s 2021 figure was down from the 53 homicides committed in Seattle the year before.</p> <p>Countywide, 42 people were killed and another 170 were injured as a result of gun violence through the end of June, according to the King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Shots Fired Project. In 2021, 88 people were killed and 372 were injured by gunfire, up from the 69 people killed and 268 people injured the year before, according to the Shots Fired data.</p> <p>Friday night was the busiest of the weekend for Harborview’s doctors, as additional trauma surgeons and two specialty surgeons were called in to treat gunshot patients, said Dr. Eileen Bulger, the hospital’s chief of trauma.</p> <p>“It certainly adds to the stress on the system. It’s why we build the schedule the way we do and have people come in at a moment’s notice — it’s part of the job,” Bulger said.</p> <p>Though doctors had enough blood on hand to treat this weekend’s gunshot patients, Bulger said a blood shortage that started with the COVID-19 pandemic has improved but isn’t totally resolved. And given that summer is always a busy time of year at the hospital, she encouraged people to roll up their sleeves and donate blood.</p> <p>“We didn’t have any shortages this weekend, but sometimes it only takes one patient to create a shortage,” she said.</p>

Bulger has not tallied the number of Harborview patients who have been treated for gunshot wounds so far this year. But in 2020 and 2021, the hospital saw a 30% increase in the number of patients treated for “penetrating trauma,” compared to the years before the pandemic, and Bulger sees that trend continuing this year.

She said that underscores the importance of the hospital’s [gun violence intervention program](#), which connects gunshot victims with services and community resources while they’re still hospitalized. The program links patients with social workers, counseling, mentorship, job training and housing assistance in an attempt to keep them from being shot again — or picking up a gun and shooting someone else.

The goal is to help them cope with the consequences of their injuries, understand what put them at risk of being shot and work with their families to disrupt and break the cycle of violence, Bulger said.

Harrell on Monday again emphasized his approach to public safety: increasing police presence [through hiring incentives](#), emphasizing the importance of community-based organizations and pressing for [changes](#) to Washington gun safety laws.

“The answers are pretty simple in nature,” he said. “We have too many guns out there and too many guns in the wrong hands.”

Harrell has proposed spending \$2 million on recruiting and hiring incentives, in a push to add 500 officers to the police force. The City Council is expected to consider Harrell’s proposal this week.

Over the past decade, the number of sworn officers at SPD has dropped from around 1,300 from 2013-19 to under 1,000 in 2022, with more than 400 resignations and retirements since 2020. While SPD staffing has been fully funded in that time, the department has struggled to recruit quickly enough to keep up with attrition.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/15 Gig Harbor police chief crime report
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/community/gateway/g-news/article264326151.html
GIST	<p>Gig Harbor Police Chief Kelly Busey gave the annual crime report for 2021 at the City Council meeting Aug. 8.</p> <p>Busey reported that crime rates in Washington state are down 3.7 percent, according to the recent Crime in Washington 2021 report by the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs. Crime rates in Gig Harbor are down 3.4 percent, he told the council, and he explained why.</p> <p>WHY IS CRIME DOWN IN GIG HARBOR?</p> <p>Chief Busey explained three reasons why crime rates are down in Gig Harbor.</p> <p>He said it’s partly a result of the Blake decision, a 2021 Washington State Supreme Court decision that said the state’s felony drug possession law was unconstitutional.</p> <p>Instead of jail time or citations, police hand those suspected of drug possession a referral card with information about getting help. Police are now prohibited from arresting someone the first two times they come in contact with that person for drug possession, Busey said.</p> <p>“Simply from a numbers standpoint, crimes against society are down because the drug possession rates have decreased with 2021 regulations,” Busey said.</p> <p>He said his officers are contacting people daily with fentanyl who they’re not arresting.</p> <p>The ACLU of Washington supports a public health approach to substance use disorders, said Mark Cooke, policy director for the Campaign for Smart Justice.</p>

He said they support referrals to services instead of arrests and that treating substance use disorders as a crime has not been effective. Putting someone in jail and starting their criminal record makes it harder for them to find housing or work. Connecting a person with services that can address the underlying causes of substance use is a better long-term solution, he said.

When asked how many people given those referrals by police are choosing to get help, Cooke said the ACLU doesn't have that data. He said several European countries, including Portugal, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic, have treated drug possession as a public health issue instead of a crime, and that these countries have lower rates of substance use disorder and overdose deaths than the U.S.

Busey said another reason crime rates are down is the police reform laws of 2021. He said those state laws prohibited police from almost any use of force without probable cause that a crime had been committed. Busey said criminals learned this and that officers had suspects walk out of stores they had just shoplifted from tell them, "I know you can't touch me."

Police were also only allowed to chase vehicles when they had probable cause that specific violent crimes were committed, Busey said.

Enoka Herat, a lawyer who follows police practices for the ACLU of Washington, told The Gateway last year that police were misinterpreting the new laws.

"There is nothing in the new law that prevents officers from detaining people based on reasonable suspicion, and this kind of misinformation is really unfortunate," she said.

"'Reasonable suspicion' is a pretty low bar," Herat said. "When they have enough evidence to make an arrest, then they can use physical force."

Lastly, Busey said crime rates have been affected by booking restrictions at jails due to COVID-19, as officials try to limit the size of jail populations and the spread of the virus. Police have been prohibited from booking suspects into jail. They were only allowed to book violent offenders, domestic violence suspects, and those arrested for their second DUI, he said.

"We have people we are pulling out of stolen cars, for instance, where we send the suspect down the road and recover the car," Busey said.

They are not taking shoplifters or drug offenders to jail at the moment, he said, while COVID-19 restrictions are still in place.

WHY ARE MOTOR VEHICLE THEFTS UP?

There was a 70.4 percent increase in motor vehicle offenses in Gig Harbor.

"Motor vehicle theft is going crazy," Busey said at the council meeting.

Busey said he fears that in 2022 the number of motor vehicle theft cases will be in the triple digits. Only 46 motor vehicle thefts were reported in Gig Harbor in 2021.

"We're currently taking up to three cars a day this year," Busey said.

He argued that motor vehicle thefts have increased due to a combination of officers' inability to pursue stolen vehicles and their inability to book motor vehicle theft suspects into jail due to COVID booking restrictions.

WHAT ARE POLICE DOING ABOUT SHOPLIFTING?

The 2021 report showed \$1.5 million in goods were stolen, roughly triple the value of property stolen the prior year. Busey told The Gateway criminals quickly figured out when officers could not arrest them, following the 2021 police reform laws.

To address property theft, Gig Harbor police implemented a business check program last spring, Busey told The Gateway.

“It has been moderately successful,” Busey said.

This system allows an employee to pick up the phone, dial 911 and say they would like a business check. “Employees are not divulging what’s going on, they’re not identifying any persons, they’re not violating their corporate policies, but that’s a signal to the officer that something is amiss and something is going on at that store,” Busey said.

Busey said this has been effective in deterring shoplifts.

“... obvious shoplifting suspects will abandon cart loads full of merchandise and leave the businesses when they see us arrive,” Busey told The Gateway.

When it comes to crimes against property, Busey said theft remains the problem. There was an 11 percent increase in larceny and theft offenses.

HOW DOES GIG HARBOR COMPARE TO THE REST OF PIERCE COUNTY?

Gig Harbor is just above the state average for crime rates in Washington state.

The city of 11,490 had 831 offenses in 2021, according to the state report.

Even though the Pierce County crime rate per thousand showed Gig Harbor almost 15 percent higher than Bonney Lake and Edgewood, Busey said he considered Gig Harbor’s crime rate to be like theirs, below the state average, because of the daily influx of people that increases Gig Harbor’s population during the day.

Gig Harbor is also above the state average for case clearance rates, Busey said. They solved 25.5 percent of cases. The state average is 18.9 percent.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Struggle to prosecute pandemic fraud
SOURCE	https://dnyuz.com/2022/08/16/prosecutors-struggle-to-catch-up-to-a-tidal-wave-of-pandemic-fraud/
GIST	<p>In the midst of the pandemic the government gave unemployment benefits to the incarcerated, the imaginary, and the dead. It sent money to “farms” that turned out to be front yards. It paid people who were on the government’s “Do Not Pay List.” It gave loans to 342 people who said their name was “N/A.”</p> <p>As the virus shuttered businesses and forced people out of work, the federal government sent a flood of relief money into programs aimed at helping the newly unemployed and boosting the economy. That included \$3.1 trillion that former President Donald J. Trump approved in 2020, followed by a \$1.9 trillion package signed into law in 2021 by President Biden.</p> <p>But those dollars came with few strings and minimal oversight. The result: one of the largest frauds in American history, with billions of dollars stolen by thousands of people, including at least one amateur who boasted of his criminal activity on YouTube.</p> <p>Now, prosecutors are trying to catch up.</p> <p>There are currently 500 people working on pandemic-fraud cases across the offices of 21 inspectors general, plus investigators from the F.B.I., the Secret Service, the Postal Inspection Service and the Internal Revenue Service.</p>

The federal government has already charged 1,500 people with defrauding pandemic-aid programs, and more than 450 people have been convicted so far. But those figures are dwarfed by the mountain of tips and leads that investigators still have to chase.

Agents in the Labor Department's inspector general's office have [39,000](#) investigations going. About 50 agents in a Small Business Administration office are sorting through two million potentially fraudulent loan applications.

Officials already concede that the sheer number of cases means that some small-dollar thefts may never be prosecuted. [Earlier this month](#), President Biden signed bills extending the statute of limitations for some pandemic-related fraud to 10 years from five, a move aimed at giving the government more time to pursue cases. "My message to those cheats out there is this: You can't hide. We're going to find you," Mr. Biden [said](#) during the signing at the White House.

Investigators say they hope the extra time will allow them to ensure that those who defrauded the government are ultimately punished, restoring a deterrent that had vanished in a flood of lies and money.

"There are years and years and years of work ahead of us," said Kevin Chambers, the Department of Justice's chief pandemic prosecutor. "I'm confident that we'll be using every last day of those 10 years."

The federal government provided about [\\$5 trillion in relief money](#) in three separate legislative packages — an enormous sum that is credited with [reducing poverty](#) and saving the country from a prolonged, painful recession.

But [investigators say](#) that Congress, in its haste to get money out the door quickly, designed all three packages with the same flaw: relying on the honor system.

For example, an expanded unemployment benefit gave workers an extra [\\$600 per week](#) in federal jobless funds on top of what they received from their state. The program was funded by the federal government but administered by states, which often had loose rules around qualifying. Applicants did not need to provide proof they had lost income because of Covid-19; they simply [had to swear it was true](#).

A similar we'll-take-your-word-for-it approach was used in two loan programs run by the Small Business Administration.

They were the [Paycheck Protection Plan](#), in which the government guaranteed loans made by private lenders, and the [Economic Injury Disaster Loan](#) program, in which the government itself gave out loans and smaller advance grants that didn't have to be repaid. In both, the government trusted businesses to self-certify that they met key requirements.

Both the Labor Department and the Small Business Administration said they tried to screen those claims — and that they did reject billions of dollars' worth of applications that didn't make sense. But that wasn't enough.

In some cases, the programs missed schemes were comically easy to spot: In one instance, 29 states paid unemployment benefits to the same person. In another, a Postal Service employee got \$82,900 loan for a business called "U.S. Postal Services." Another individual got 10 loans for 10 nonexistent bathroom-renovation businesses, [using the email address of a burrito shop](#).

In the Paycheck Protection Plan, private banks were supposed to help with the screening, since in theory they were dealing with customers they already knew. But that left out many small businesses, and [the government allowed online lenders](#) to enter the program. This year, [University of Texas researchers found](#) that some of those "fintech" lenders appeared less diligent about catching fraud.

In another case, a mother and daughter in Westchester County, N.Y., stand accused of [turning fraud into a franchise](#) — helping other people cook up fake businesses in order to get loans from the Economic Injury Disaster program.

Andrea Ayers advised one client to tell the government she ran a baking business from home, although she was not a baker, prosecutors said.

“You bake,” Ms. Ayers texted to the client, adding four laugh-crying emojis, according to charging documents.

“Lol,” the client wrote back.

The scheme was designed, prosecutors said, to take advantage of the Small Business Administration’s advance grant program, which provided applicants up to \$10,000 up front while the agency decided whether to award an a larger loan. Even if the loan was rejected, in many cases the applicant could still keep the grant.

Prosecutors said that Ms. Ayers’s daughter, Alicia Ayers, texted another client that the small size of the grants meant they were unlikely to be punished: “10k is not enough for jail time lol.”

The government charged both Ayerses with wire fraud. They have pleaded not guilty. Their lawyers did not respond to requests for comment.

In some corners of the internet, schemes to defraud were discussed in chat rooms and [YouTube videos](#), where scammers offered to help for a cut of the proceeds. Some used the money on necessities, like mortgage bills or car payments. But many seemed to act out of opportunism and greed, splurging on a [yacht](#), a [mansion](#), a [\\$38,000 Rolex](#) or a [\\$57,000 Pokemon trading card](#).

Vinath Oudomsine bought the Pokemon card in January 2021, after receiving a loan from the Small Business Administration for a nonexistent business. He pleaded guilty to defrauding the loan program in October 2021, leaving the U.S. government [responsible for selling the card](#).

Pandemic fraud became such an open secret that it ceased to be much of a secret at all. In September 2020, a California rapper named Fontrell Antonio Baines, who performs as Nuke Bizzle, posted a [music video on YouTube](#), bragging in detail about how he’d gotten rich by submitting false unemployment claims. His song was called “[EDD](#),” after California’s Employment Development Department, which paid the benefits.

“I just seen 30 cards land in one day. Got straight on the phone and activate,” Mr. Baines rapped in the song, flashing cash and envelopes with preloaded debit cards from the state.

“Unemployment so sweet,” Mr. Baines said.

All three of those programs are now over. There is no official estimate for the amount of money that was stolen from them — or from pandemic-relief programs in general. The Justice Department has charged people with about \$1 billion in fraud so far, and is investigating other cases involving \$6 billion more, investigators said.

But other reports have suggested the real number could be much higher. One official said the total of “improper” unemployment payments could be more than \$163 billion, as first reported [by The Washington Post](#). In the Economic Injury Disaster Loan program, a watchdog found that \$58 billion had been paid to companies that shared the same addresses, phone numbers, bank accounts or other data as other applicants — a sign of potential fraud.

“It’s clear there’s tens of billions in fraud,” said Michael Horowitz, the chairman of the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee, which includes 21 agency inspectors general working on fraud cases. “Would it surprise me if it exceeded \$100 billion? No.”

The effort to catch fraudsters began as soon as the money started flowing, and the first person was [charged with benefit fraud in May 2020](#). But investigators were quickly deluged with tips at a scale they’d never dealt with before. The Small Business Administration’s fraud hotline — which had previously received 800 calls a year — got 148,000 in the first year of the pandemic. The Small Business Administration sent its inspector general two million loan applications to check for potential identity theft. At the Department of Labor, the inspector general’s office has 39,000 cases of suspected unemployment fraud, a 1,000 percent increase from prepandemic levels.

But prosecutors face a key disadvantage: While fraud takes minutes, investigations take months and prosecutions take even longer.

Mr. Baines, who detailed his jobless benefit scheme on YouTube, was arrested in September 2020, when Las Vegas police found other people’s unemployment-benefit cards in his car. Mr. Baines [pleaded guilty to mail fraud](#) last month. His attorneys declined to comment.

Hannibal Ware, the Small Business Administration inspector general, said his office has tried to focus on cases involving large thefts, career criminals or ringleaders who organized a fraud operation.

“Only about 50 working field agents, right? So how do I take one of my agents off of a \$20 million case to work a \$10,000 case?” said Mr. Ware, who is known as Mike. “Because they will tell me, ‘Mike, the work is the same.’”

That has allowed many individuals who took advantage of government programs to go unpunished. Despite ample evidence of people fraudulently obtaining \$10,000 advance grants, Mr. Ware’s office has not sought charges for cases involving only a single grant, falsely obtained. It would cost more than \$10,000 just to investigate each one.

In all, that program awarded 3.9 million loans totaling about \$389 billion, on top of \$27 billion in grants that did not have to be repaid, according to the Small Business Administration. Many of the allegations of fraud in the grants program date to the [first weeks of the pandemic](#), when the government gave out 5.8 million advance grants worth [\\$19.7 billion](#) in just over 100 days. In that program, fraud was easy to pull off, according to [a government watchdog](#), which cited numerous loans given to businesses that were ineligible for funding.

Mr. Ware said that he recently limited his agents to working 10 cases at a time, telling them, “You’re killing yourself. I have to protect you from you.”

In some cases, lawyers for those charged with committing pandemic fraud have sought to argue that their clients should be judged less harshly for stealing because the government made it so easy.

The government “was handing out money with no checks and a lot of people took advantage of that,” Ashwin J. Ram, an attorney for convicted fraudster Richard Ayvazyan, [told The New York Times in November](#).

“It’s a honey trap,” he added. “Richard Ayvazyan fell into that trap.” Mr. Ayvazyan was sentenced to [17 years in prison](#) for participating in a ring that sought \$20 million in fraudulent loans.

In the case of Mr. Oudomsine, the Pokemon card purchaser, his lawyers argued in March that a judge should be lenient in deciding his sentence because the fraud had taken hardly any time at all.

“It is an event without significant planning, of limited duration,” said lawyer Brian Jarrard, who was Mr. Oudomsine’s attorney at the time.

That didn't work.

U.S. District Judge Dudley H. Bowen Jr. sentenced Mr. Oudomsine to three years in prison, more than prosecutors had asked for, to "demonstrate to the world that this is the consequence" of fraud, according to a transcript of the sentencing.

Now, Mr. Oudomsine is appealing, with a new lawyer and a new argument. Deterrence, the new lawyer argues, is moot here because the pandemic-relief programs are over.

"There's no way to deter someone from doing it, when there's no way they can do it any longer," said David Rafus, Mr. Oudomsine's new lawyer.

Biden administration officials say they're trying to prepare for the next disaster, seeking to build a system that would quickly check applications for signs of identity theft.

"Criminal syndicates are going to look for weak links at moments of crisis to attack us," said Gene Sperling, the White House coordinator for pandemic aid. He said the White House now aims to build an ongoing system that would detect identity theft quickly in applications for aid: "The right time to start building a stronger system to prevent identity theft is now, not in the middle of the next serious crisis."

In the meantime, the arrests go on.

Last week, prosecutors charged a correctional officer at a federal prison in Atlanta with defrauding the Paycheck Protection Program, saying she had received two loans totaling \$38,200 in 2020 and 2021. The officer, Harrescia Hopkins, has pleaded not guilty. Her attorney did not respond to a request for comment.

"You can't have a system where crime pays," said Mr. Horowitz, of the federal Pandemic Response Accountability Committee. "It undercuts the entire system of justice. It undercuts people's faith in these programs, in their government. You can't have that."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/15 Ex-cops reject Floyd killing plea deal
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/15/us/george-floyd-officers-reject-plea-deal/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Ex-Minneapolis police officers J. Alexander Kueng and Tou Thao told a judge Monday they have rejected a plea deal offered by state prosecutors for their role in George Floyd's killing, Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison's deputy chief of staff said.</p> <p>Their trial, set to begin October 24, marks the latest chapter in a case that in May 2020 catalyzed a nation's anger over how some in law enforcement treat people of color.</p> <p>Kueng and Thao -- already awaiting sentencing on federal convictions -- are charged with aiding and abetting second-degree unintentional murder and aiding and abetting second-degree manslaughter for their role in the fatal restraint of Floyd on a Minneapolis street. They have pleaded not guilty.</p> <p>Kueng and Thao both were offered the same plea deal former officer Thomas Lane accepted earlier this year, said Ellison's deputy, John Stiles. Lane pleaded guilty in June to aiding and abetting second-degree manslaughter and is set to be sentenced on September 21, with the parties jointly recommending "a sentence of 36 months, which in Minnesota ... typically means 24 months-time actually served," Stiles said.</p> <p>CNN has reached out to attorneys representing Kueng and Thao for further comment.</p> <p>The charges stem from the former officers' actions -- or lack thereof -- as their colleague Derek Chauvin pressed his knee into the neck and back of Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man who was handcuffed and lying on his stomach, for over nine minutes on May 25, 2020.</p>

	<p>During the arrest, Lane held down Floyd's legs, Kueng held down Floyd's torso, and Thao stood nearby and kept back a crowd of upset bystanders. Harrowing video taken by a bystander showed Floyd desperately pleading for them to let him breathe and calling for his mother before he lost consciousness and died.</p> <p>Chauvin was convicted last spring of Floyd's murder in a state trial and was sentenced to more than 22 years in prison. He also pleaded guilty in federal court in December to violating Floyd's civil rights and has been sentenced to 21 years in prison.</p> <p>Kueng, Lane and Thao were convicted in federal court in February of violating Floyd's civil rights. Kueng was sentenced to three years in prison; Thao was sentenced to 3-1/2 years in prison; and Lane was sentenced to 2-1/2 years in prison.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/15 Rushdie suspect days before the attack
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/inside-salman-rushdie-stabbing-suspect-hadi-matars-last-days-before-the-attack?ref=home?ref=home
GIST	<p>Three days before Hadi Matar allegedly rushed the stage at a literary event to brutally attack British-Indian author Salman Rushdie, the 24-year-old wrote a late-night email to his New Jersey gym to cancel his membership.</p> <p>“Hey this is Hadi,” Matar wrote in an Aug. 9 email to the State of Fitness Boxing Club at 1:31 a.m. “I was going tk [sic] ask if you guys can disable autopay for me right now. As I won’t be able to make it back to the gym right now. Thanks.”</p> <p>The email, obtained by The Daily Beast, also showcased Matar’s avatar: the Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader of Iran who upheld a call to all Muslims—or a fatwa—to kill Rushdie over three decades ago.</p> <p>“I didn’t even think anything of it when I first saw the avatar,” the gym’s manager, Rosaria Calabrese, told The Daily Beast on Monday. “Now it’s chilling, given what happened.”</p> <p>Calabrese also noted that she did not respond to the email until around 6 p.m. on Aug. 11, telling Matar that while he was supposed to come in person to cancel his auto-pay she would “make the exception.” Prosecutors allege that around that same time, Matar took a bus from Fairview, New Jersey to Chautauqua Institution in western New York—his ticket already purchased to see Rushdie speak on the importance of providing writers with places for asylum.</p> <p>On Friday morning, moments after Rushdie had sat down on stage at the intellectual retreat in western New York, Matar allegedly brutally stabbed the author about 10 times before a horrified audience.</p> <p>Matar, who was arrested on the scene after bystanders rushed the stage, has since been charged with second-degree attempted murder and assault with a weapon. The grisly incident left Rushdie with grave injuries that briefly forced him on a ventilator.</p> <p>His attorney, Nathaniel Barone, told The Daily Beast on Monday that he spoke to his client that morning—and declined to provide details about their conversation but did note that Matar “had no priors.” “It’s so early in the process at this point we are gathering information and trying to confirm the information we are given,” Barone added, stressing that anyone charged with a crime “has the presumption of innocence.”</p> <p>While authorities have not gone into details about the motivation behind the attack, Chautauqua County District Attorney Jason Schmidt stressed during Matar’s arraignment on Saturday that he had taken steps</p>

to “preplan” the incident where Rushdie suffered three stab wounds to the neck, four to the stomach, and sustained a puncture wound to his right eye.

“This was a targeted, unprovoked, pre-planned attack on Mr. Rushdie,” Schmidt said. “He didn’t bring a wallet. He had cash, prepaid Visa cards with him. He had false identification with him.”

Henry Reese, the co-founder and president of City of Asylum—which was founded to provide sanctuary to writers exiled under threat of persecution—was set to interview Rushdie on Friday and suffered “a minor head injury” during the attack. He has since been released from the hospital.

[According to Yahoo News](#), a New York Police Department intelligent assessment states that an analysis of Matar’s “probable social media presence indicates a likely adherence or sympathy towards Shi’a extremism and sympathies to the Iranian regime/Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).” The report also included pictures from a WhatsApp account believed to belong to Matar, which includes the leader of Iraq’s pro-Iranian militia movement.

“The apparent assassination attempt on Salman Rushdie by an individual with strong indicators of ideological support for the Iranian regime, specifically the IRGC, comes amid a series of recent high-profile plot disruptions involving individuals with ties to Iran targeting perceived enemies of Iran in the U.S.,” the NYPD assessment added, according to Yahoo.

Rushdie’s work, particularly his 1988 novel *The Satanic Verses*, has attracted fierce protests, death threats, and even a fatwa for his assassination by the former religious leader of Iran, who accused Rushdie of blasphemy. A [\\$4 million bounty](#) on his head remains active to this day.

But while one of Matar’s former high school classmates previously told The Daily Beast that he was shocked to hear that the “very devoted Muslim” could have engaged in such violence—his mother revealed on Sunday his spiral into extremism.

In a Sunday interview with [The Daily Mail](#), Silvana Fardos said that while she was “shell shocked” that her “quiet” son could be accused of such an awful crime, she did note that her son changed after a 2018 month-long trip to Lebanon to visit his father. While she thought the trip would motivate him “to complete school, to get his degree and a job,” Fardos admitted that instead Matar “locked himself in the basement” and isolated himself from society. She added that her son would cook his own meals and live a nocturnal lifestyle.

Fardos, however, said that recently Matar seemed like he was attempting to return to life, noting that he had begun working at a local Marshalls and had talked about going back to school to study cybersecurity.

Calabrese said that on April 11, Matar signed up for the premium package of the State of Fitness Boxing Club—allowing him to both use the fitness equipment and take group boxing classes. She added that, unlike other prospective gym-goers, Matar did not ask for a trial and knew exactly what kind of group class he wanted to join.

During his brief stint, the gym’s owner told The Daily Beast on Monday, Matar took about 27 boxing classes and used the equipment a handful of times. She noted that although Matar “was really a beginner” and was not “very athletic,” he seemed eager to “hone his skills” at boxing.

“I manage the desk and he would come in, check in very respectfully and politely,” the gym owner added. “He was friendly and nice but he wasn’t chatty or social. He just did his thing and then left.”

The gym owner added that when Matar canceled his membership on Aug. 9, she did not think about it for a second. It was not until The Daily Beast emailed her on Friday, just hours after Rushdie’s attack, that she “put two and two together.”

	“After that email, I went back and saw that I had just emailed him back the day prior,” she added. “I realized that at the time, I was curious that he was conscientious enough to let us know he wanted to cancel. Usually, we have clients who just remove their credit card information and we never hear from them again. He had the courtesy to let us know he wanted to discontinue his account.”
Return to Top	

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[Return to Top](#)